

Many people gathered around Haeundae beach. A lot of them were citizens and reporters who came to watch the unexpected outbreak of the undead monsters.

“Please refrain from accessing past this point!”

“It’s dangerous!” said the police and the Hunter Association’s staff from the Busan branch as they were struggling to set up and barricade the access of the citizens. Somehow, the rushing footsteps did not diminish at all.

“How frightening! I’ve heard that even an S rank hunter from Soul had to come!” After the cataclysm, the position of hunters had become one of the most popular professions. If you were to enter the dungeon by yourself, you will soon find that there aren’t as many dangerous things inside as they would have you to think. Because of this, it was natural for everyone to envy the hunters who could earn a lot of money, and among them, a few S-class hunters in the world gained popularity that was comparable to that of celebrities.

Once a dungeon break broke out in an open place such as this, the reactions of the citizens divided themselves in two. Either run away, or come to watch.

Most of them chose the former, yet there were still surprisingly many people who flocked to see the gates for themselves without fear.

One example of this category were:

“Are you seeing these viewers? I ventured out to explore the skeletons you see in the movies! If you send donations, we will launch the drone right away!”

“Guys! The Guildmaster of the Reapers, Lim Tae-Gyu, said he has applied for support on this raid, shouldn’t it be obvious to see him here? Thank you for the Moon balloon [1]!” Amongst the citizens, there were quite a few personal broadcasting Youtubers

that proclaimed themselves to be reporters. Some even came out with their expensive drones to relay the situation of the battle. These were the cases that exposed themselves to a bigger danger by taking more provocative actions solely to increase their donations.

“Senior.” The female employee of the association who had been hit by the crowd in the front, asked with a tearful expression. “Do we have to repeat this protocol everytime there is a dungeon break?”

The senior pressed down his throbbing brow with a tired expression. “What else is there to do? This is the largest dungeon break ever in Busan.” At the same time, the sight of the senior looking back at her made the fatigue even thicker. Had the gate been discovered earlier, the situation wouldn’t have escalated to this extent. *Not to mention the sight of the skeleton soldiers from the sea off Busan.* It made you feel as though you entered the scene from the classic movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean*. In addition, this time the S-class hunter

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who recently attracted the news, appeared directly in front of them, so the interest and stimulation were indescribable to say the least.

"Isn't this good material for aggro? If i were a youtuber I would have come out with my camera as well." Sasu, who was also a fan of broadcasting, sighed at the irony. "Although it's really cool to see him up close."

"Who? Lim Tae-Gyu?"

"Yes, who else? You know he can shoot ten arrows at once and they all hit."

"Well, even if controversies surround him, he is still an S-class hunter." As he said this, the senior's eyes were also following Lim Tae-Gyu and giving out small exclamations. *I heard that Lim Tae-Gyu was also put in the scouting team rather than fighting directly.*

Unlike every other archer, he didn't just shoot from a safe place. Instead he used his agility to run directly between the skeletons whilst tracking the traces of where the gate was located. Whenever he was surrounded by skeletons from time to time, he would shoot his bow and penetrate the road ahead.

[I'm donating 10,000 won [3] for every 10 kills that Lim Tae-Gyu does!]

[I'm donating 50,000 won [4] for every 100 kills Lim Tae-Gyu does!]

"Kya! Thank you for the donations!"

"Viewers, I'll be counting the skeletons that Lim Tae-Gyu kills in real time!"

*What the—?*

Unlike the hunters who risked their lives fighting, something absurd suddenly appeared on the outskirts of the beach. There was an amount of huge donations pouring that was proportionate to the beasts dying. All of this happened in less than a minute since the scouting team and Lim Tae-Gyu had gone out to fight.

*Does the entire country suddenly come out when I fight?* He wondered if this was the reason for that proverb 'Bears do tricks while the bear owners get money'. Although the reality was that the hunters who played as bears earned far more money than personal broadcasting Youtubers, so there was no reason to be mad at them. *Besides, isn't this also kind of creative in this economy?*

Anyways, from the Association's point of view they just hoped that the situation would be solved safely without anyone getting hurt.

"Uh?"

All of the sudden, a new oddity appeared.

**Whoo oh oh~**

A wave of cold air hit them.

"Huh?"

All the eyes that had been looking at Lim Tae-Gyu suddenly turned to one direction.

His eyes went wide. "W-what is that?!" Said Lim Tae-Gyu while he and the scouting team scattered in different directions.

Several hunters were gathered in Busan at the time, including A-class hunters such as the famous guildmaster of the Knights Guild. Among them were also a few unknown faces, one of them, the most powerful, reached out his hand.

The sea off Busan turned into an arctic landscape.

!

!?

Skeletons that were crawling out of the sandy beach, as well as the waves leaping behind them, became frozen solid in such a wonderful sight.

Even the expressions of everyone who saw the scene also temporarily froze.

"Who- who is that person!?"

"Fellow viewers! Does anyone have information about that hunter?" Astonishment began to burst out here and there. Haeundae beach was covered with tremendous cheers.

"Papa, search quickly! Just who were the people that volunteered for the scouting team!"

"I'm doing it now!" Even the reporters from broadcasting stations quickly started asking for information from the Knights Guild.

Some reckless Youtubers started grabbing the association staff who were controlling them and began to beg. "Who the hell is that hunter? Please give us some info!"

"That's a blizzard right? Even among the advanced magic hunters only a few can pull it off to this extent!"

"As far as I know, it would take a lot of mana to use such a wide range of magic, so who the hell..."

[1 million won [5] to the person who finds the Hunter's identity the fastest!]

"I will share the donations with you so please let me know!"

"Stop coming! You can't access this place!"

"Please refrain from crossing the safety line..."

The reactions of the maddening civilians was quite natural considering no one had expected to see such a wide-range magic, that was capable of causing extreme weather, in their lives.

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This cold blizzard suddenly blew into the sunny skies and froze hundreds of skeletons all at once!

"It's the first time that this kind of hunter has ever appeared in our country!"

"I found it!"

!!

Everyone suddenly turned their attention at the cry of the stranger. There, a Youtuber who had connections to the Knights Guild, held up his cellphone like it was the World Cup trophy while shouting triumphantly. "Woojin Guild! It's from Woojin Guild! His name is Sung Suho, a hunter from the Woojin Guild!"

"Huh? Woojin Guild?"

"This is my first time hearing of that guild."

"Is it a new guild?"

Once they finally acknowledged the identity of the hunter who used blizzard magic, people began to be confused. There was no information about Woojin guild at all in the public, except for some who had good memories.

"Wait a minute! Could it be Sung Suho?!"

They frantically started searching the internet for some articles that they had seen before.

"Sung Suho, isn't that the hunter who solved Lee Minsung's case?"

"Yeah that's right! There is also a picture of Baek Miho and Lim Tae-Gyu side by side!"

The collective intelligence of people was truly astonishing.

After Suho used his skill, he smiled knowing the people had managed to figure out his identity in an instant. *Just as planned*. He quietly thought while watching the commotion from afar. *Thank goodness I created a guild, there are rarely good situations like this where I can publicize our guild*. During the various cases he was solving, Suho had continued to hide his identity, half for his own sake, half because of others. The purpose was just to avoid revealing the use of the Shadow Monarch's powers to the apostles of the Itarims, who, of course, were hiding in plain sight.

But he could afford to show off other skills in public that didn't come from the Shadow Monarch. *It's for the best, actually*. The reputation of the guild was now more important to Suho's plan than anything else.

For what reason did he create a guild in the first place? To level up, of course. He planned to make a guild in order to enter higher ranked dungeons and level up more. However those gates could be bought off with money, money that was scheduled to come from the

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Scavenger guild next month. And with such circumstances why would he try to increase his guild's reputation then?

*In order to go to North Korea, the guild's reputation is important.*

Advanced dungeons are important, yes, but Suho's ultimate objective was to travel to North Korea so he can hunt.

After the cataclysm, North Korea was turned into a monster field in all directions, becoming an inaccessible demonic realm. To put it bluntly, the Chairman of the association Woo Jin-Chul who went out to aid North Korea with Choi Jong-In, wasn't even able to come back. If they didn't wipe out the monsters that swarmed in North Korea at the time then they would come down to invade South Korea afterwards. Supposedly they were meant to 'aid' but their actions seemed close to a conquest of the north.

But for Suho, the worst environment in North Korea was a different world all together, filled with chunks of experience all over the place. The problem came to be that North Korea was not a place anyone could go to even if they wanted to. Even if it collapsed completely, it still wouldn't be a unified peninsula between the two Koreas. Moreover, hunters who committed crimes like the villains at Jisan prison would also follow. Because in this situation, if anyone was going to cross the country without any standards, then the criminals would be the first to run away to a place where their skills would be wanted. This would mean they would have a strong chance to relentlessly commit crimes against the survivors of North Korea still alive everywhere.

It would become a lawless place.

So, the Korean government and the Hunter Association were legally blocking unqualified guild's from ever stepping foot on North Korean soil. The most important of these qualifications was awareness. A guild had to be recognized by the public, and one of the most effective ways to do so was to perform a prominent role where citizens would pay attention.

*Issues like Jisan prison were ambiguous.* Wiping out 500 villains was a respectable thing to do, but the public opinion divided itself more than he thought.

—He is a person who slaughtered 500 people in one day. That isn't normal.

—He's a killer at minimum.

—BUT isn't it okay since he killed the villains and not the people?

His identity was blocked by the White Tiger guild following his cooperation within Jisan Prison, but if it ever came to light that he was the one to have killed all of them, it would be difficult for Suho to access North Korea.

*But with this...*

As part of the scouting team, Suho jumped into the middle of the skeletons and showed his strength without hesitation.

"That kid is the real deal! I sent you out to scout for the gate, but you are annihilating the skeletons instead!" Lim Tae-Gyu said, Suho's splendid debut, making him embarrassed. *Did you have a skill like that before, or did you receive a skill runestone as a gift from Thomas Andre?*

The power of it was truly an unbelievable sight. A cold snowstorm ranging unstoppable in the coastal waters of Haeundae. A white icy road spread out like a carpet with Suho in the center of it running out without hesitation while skeletons statues were frozen solid next to him. He wondered just what kind of nickname people would give him during the live broadcast that was showing such a tremendous sight.

*Stop.*

"Huh?" Suho, who was still rushing forward without hesitation, suddenly stopped walking and listened to Sillad's words.

[The Frost Monarch, King of Snowfolk, listens to Sirka's prayer]

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[1]Moon Balloons: Sort of like a donation in webcam streaming videos.

[2] I think it means viewers? Or maybe the scandal type of aggro since Lim TG is still a controversial man.

[3]7,56 dollars

[4] around 38 dollars

[5] 758 dollars

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[The Frost Monarch, King of Snowfolk, listens to Sirkas prayer]

[Sirka, descendant of the Frost Monarch, prays earnestly!]

Sillad heard the earnest prayers of Sirka who had left to search the tombs of the dragons with Cha Hae-In earlier.

The descendant's prayers had originally maintained its purpose to offer praise and worship for the spirits of the dead. Because Sirka had been a descendant of his own choosing, Sillad readily responded to her first prayer. Heartfelt and wonderful emotions overcame him after hearing the first prayer ever directed at him.

*...Wait... hold on, what is this?*

Of course, it was nothing like the praises he had seen before.

"Mister Sillad! I'm in a hurry right now! Can you call Suho for us?"

*Huh?*

[The Frost Monarch doubts his ears.]

"Oh! If it's possible could you also show him the things we are seeing too? Although for a Monarch even that might be too much huh..."

[The Frost Monarch widens his eyes and opens his mouth at Sirka's provocation!]

Her purpose in talking to Sillad was clear. Just like modern humans, Sirka was using the prayers as an excuse to text message Suho, or even video message. And just how could he, The Frost Monarch, King of Snowfolk, be used as a simple messenger!

*No, I mustn't get mad, this is still the first prayer after all, but still, there should be a sacrifice or greetings at minimum!*

[The Frost Monarch falls into thought with a remorseful expression.]

[The Frost Monarch sighs deeply.]

"Why are you so noisy all of a sudden?" In a different place, Suho clicked his tongue briefly as he watched the system's messages appear one after another in front of him. His confusion was apparent as he could only hear Sillad muttering to himself while he had been running forward to strike the frozen skeletons.

T-ring!

[A message has arrived!]

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"A message?" Another window suddenly popped up in front of him. "Could it be a new level-up quest?" Suho welcomed it immediately and opened the message box.

[You have one unread message]

[Mother's Letter] (Unread)

"A letter from my mother?" Confusion appeared in Suho's eyes. At first he had seen something about Sirka's prayer, and now it seemed like there was a real message that arrived instead of a quest. Not to mention that it came from the tomb of the dragons where his mother had gone.

"Did something happen to her? Check Message!" Suho rapidly opened to see the contents of it. A belt rang and at that moment Cha Hae-In's voice was heard from beyond their dimension.

[Suho, it seems like we found something here, can you ask Beru to check what it is?]

[Kieek?!]

Beru suddenly popped out from Suho's arms.

[The King of Snowfolk, The Frost Monarch uses his skill 'Ice flower Illusion']

All of a sudden a frigid blizzard that raged in all directions started to blend around Suho, making transparent ice flowers bloom similarly to a spring haze or a mirage in the desert. In front of Suho and Beru, the images of Cha Hae-In and Sirka, who were at the tomb of dragons, began to spread out.

!

[Kieek?!]

The fantasy ice flowers became smaller and smaller as they showed the place where Cha Hae-In and Sirka stood.

Gigantic bones of berserk dragons towering over them like huge ruins and pillars. Underneath it, Cha Hae-In and Sirka fought a battle against the numerous dragon soldiers that surrounded them.

[Unbelievable! It's a Dragon disease!]

Beru wore an expression of disbelief.

[Little Lord this is a big deal!]

He immediately realized what was Cha Hae-In's intention by showing him that scene and explained it to Suho.

[The dragon soldiers are beings born from dragon teeth, but they disappear as soon as their owner dies, so how...]



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"Hold on, does this mean there are as many soldiers as there are live dragons where my mother is?"

[No! That 's nonsense! Early on, the Destruction Monarch's legions were killed and incorporated into the Shadow Legion!—]

Beru felt as he talked, suddenly realizing something in the middle and opening his eyes.

[I can't believe the descendant of the Destruction Monarch is...]

Beru had no choice but to hold back his words over who he was talking about.

The King of Light Dragons, The Monarch of Destruction, Antares!

He was the strongest of eight monarchs, born in the beginning of darkness, and the only one who could overpower him was the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo. He was the true incarnation of destruction, willing to even destroy himself for the sake of raging a war of blood, screams, madness and destruction. It's for that reason why Sung Jin-Woo had thoroughly pushed the dragon army to the brink of extinction. Not a single dragon survived on the path that the Shadow Monarch led.

What was the reason Sung Jin-Woo had fought such a terrible battle? Wasn't it because he was concerned that a new descendant of the Dragon Emperor[1] would appear later?

[But the descendant of the Dragon Emperor must have appeared beforehand!]

Beru couldn't believe the situation at all. Yet the dragon soldiers teeming around them were proof! Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Suho hurriedly opened his mouth.

"Sillad! Tell my mother to get out of there as quickly as possible—"

*Kwurreung!*

Right as he said that, in the illusion of the ice flower, Cha Hae-In raised her sword. From above, silent lightning bolts stretched out and pierced those dragon soldiers.

Cha Hae-In's cheerful voice was heard again by Suho and Beru

[Should we be worried about your mother right now?] [2]

"..."

[...]

The demon king's Longsword in Cha Hae-In's hands was none other than the weapon of Baran, King of Demons, Monarch of White Flames. There was nothing more dangerous here than an S-class hunter carrying such an object. Even if the descendant of the Monarch of Destruction appeared, it will still be only a descendant. They wouldn't be Cha Hae-In's opponent yet.

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[Something seems to be strange here. There are many dragon soldiers but no matter where I look, I can't find a single living dragon.]

Hearing Cha Hae-In's words, Beru gained back his sanity. Considering the size of a Light Dragon, there shouldn't be a way to hide such a huge body in such a vast world.

[Looking at the movements, it seems as though their feelings of protection are really strong. In this situation, do you think Beru could give me some advice on what to do?]

[Yes, I understand the situation.]

At those words, Beru looked at the ice flower illusion with calm eyes. In the meantime, Suho kept wandering among the frozen skeletons in the cold blizzard, looking for traces of a hidden Gaye.

Beru finally opened his mouth.

[First of all, dragons have a habit of gathering their magical energy inside their hearts! So if something important exists, the location is most likely near their heart.]

No matter how many bones were left, the corpses of the light dragons collapsed in the same way in which they were alive. Their gigantic corpses are similar to huge ruins. The place Beru pointed towards was right around the heart of those corpses.

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch, nods his head saying that he will convey that.]

As soon as Sillad said that he would convey Beru's words to Cha Hae-In, something happened.

"Who dares to use magic in front of me!"

!

*Pachangchang!!*

[The Skill 'Ice Flower Illusion' is forcibly canceled.]

Sillad's skill shattered as the entire sandy beach full of skeletons began to sway like waves.

"Ehh?!"

"Kyaaaaaagh!!"

"What is this!?"

The hunters that fought the skeletons, struggled to keep their balance on the rolling sand.

*Kuwaaaa*

However, the sandy beach they were standing on formed a huge whirlpool and began to suck everyone –including the skeletons– down like a vortex[3].

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The aftermath continued even for the citizens watching from afar.

"Viewers! It seems something strange has happened—Ahh!" The Youtuber who had been piloting his drone camera had unknowingly come close to the scene and was sucked into the sand with both legs intact. He couldn't run away.

"Ahhh! Ahhh! Help! ¡Help!" He struggled to get out of the sand while his body was being helplessly sucked downwards.

"Oh god I'm going to die!" The idea of dying, which he had never thought about once in his life, suddenly appeared in his mind as a guest.

*Snap!*

!

Suddenly, someone's hand grabbed the Youtuber by the collar and lifted him up.

"Phuak!" He struggled to breathe as he was forced to the top. He instinctively turned his gaze to his savior.

"Thank you-aah!"

*Poof!*

He couldn't finish his words as his body was mercilessly thrown out of the sand.

"¡Aahh!"

"Here! Take him!"

Fortunately the association hunters caught the Youtuber before he almost plummeted to the ground. After letting out a heavy breath, he turned around to find the person that had saved him.

And he noticed he wasn't the only one being saved.

*¡Poof poof poof!*

"¡Aaagh!"

"Ahh—"

From the distance he could see the people flying through the sky as if they had just been thrown around and getting caught by the hunters of the association. The Youtuber's gaze finally recognized the face of the person that was throwing them outside.

"Hunter Sung Suho..."

"Its hunter Sung Suho of the Woojin guild!"

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It was the hunter that had caused the blizzard in the middle of the beach. And he wasn't the only one. The other members of the Woojin guild soon followed Sung Suho.

"Do-Gyun Hyung!"

"Yes! Leave the rescuing to me!"

Surprisingly, even Lim Do-Gyun, who was an E class hunter, was rescuing people from the sand vortex faster than any of the other hunters there. Due to his agile legs, he was even rescuing hunters of higher ranks than himself, all without losing his balance on top of the whirlpool that raged relentlessly under his feet.

'He is really good at escaping.' Suho didn't dare to imagine just what kind of training torture Ammut had given Lim Do-Gyun all this time. Although thanks to that he was able to concentrate on the battle at the center of the sudden chaos.

A sand vortex? Suho didn't care about this at all.

'Rigid Body Art.'

*Quaang!*

Instead, he ran towards the center of the sandy vortex with his rigid body overlaid on both legs.

[Little lord.]

"I know." At Beru's words, Suho's eyes shone intensely. There was a familiar energy at the end of his glaring gaze.

Illusions.

An ability most often used by the evil races living in the fantasy world.

"There are demons."

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch, frowns at the fact that his magic has been broken]

Just like Sillad's reaction, it seemed that the magic he used had also touched the pride of the demons hiding inside the sand. Suho shouted as he rushed towards the center of the sand vortex to the demon's hideout.

"Sillad! Tell my mother about Beru's words!"

He had already delivered said words to Cha Hae-In. Coincidentally, she had arrived at the heart of the dragon guarded by the dragon soldiers when she heard him.

"Right here..."

"What are all these things?"

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Cha Hae-In and Sirka looked with firm expressions at the numerous eggs gathered there.  
Sirk muttered in a groaning voice

“These are dragon eggs.”

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[1] I think they gave him the title of Dragon Emperor instead of Dragon King, the same went in the SL light novel so I won't change it.

[2]: the most direct translation I got was: [Oh, by the way, aren't you worried about your mother right now?] Soooo... I kinda changed it to make it more understandable.

[3]: Literal translation would be swamp though vortex or whirlpool does get the point across better.

# 166

A dragon's nest.

This would be an accurate expression to describe the place where the dragon soldiers were guarding human-sized eggs.

They didn't have time to count the numbers one by one because they were trying to fend off the dragon soldiers, but even at first glance, a few hundred of them could be spotted.

"Did the dragon soldiers move all of them to one place?"

"I think so. There's no way the dragons would have all gathered here to lay eggs during the war."

It was as they said. As it seemed that the soldiers here had gathered the hidden eggs from each place. No matter where their original location may be, wouldn't it have been easier to protect them all this way?

'Or maybe it's the instinct of the dragon soldiers.'

All of a sudden, Sirka had a strange question pop into her head. "But why would your husband leave all these eggs intact?"

"Leave them?"

"Well, the Shadow Monarch is famous for incorporating his enemies into his shadow army unconditionally when he kills them."

"Ah!" Cha Hae-In also realized something from Sirka's words.

The souls of countless dragons that died here had already become shadow soldiers that served Sung Jin-Woo as their king. Therefore, they wouldn't have any reason to keep the existence of the eggs a secret from Sung Jin-Woo. Even if the dragons hid the eggs in secret places before serving Sung Jin-Woo, after that, of course, they would have no choice but to still tell him their location.

As Sirka said in other words, Sung Jin-Woo knew that these eggs were here, so they both came to the conclusion that he left them here on purpose.

'But why?'

Cha Hae-In eventually found the reason.

"...Ah."

The moment she inadvertently touched the dragon egg.

*Pass~*

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!

Surprisingly, the surface of the egg that seemed hard as stone began to scatter like dust at her touch.

"Wait, what?"

Cha Hae-In and Sirka's eyes widened.

The inside was empty.

"How can it be empty?"

Seeing this, Sirka hurriedly made her way to the other eggs and started touching them one by one.

*Passeuk*

*Passasak~*

The eggs scattered like ashes into the air without much effort. It was striking just how they managed to maintain their original form.

An ashen blizzard filled the tombs of these berserk dragons.

"Even these are hollow!"

"Is that so?"

"Could it be that your husband knew these things were dead and didn't care much about it?" Sirka's guess was quite plausible. However, Cha Hae-In still had a serious expression.

"Sirka, is it normal for a dragon egg to be empty even when they die without hatching?"

"Well, so far I don't..." As an ice elf, Sirka didn't know much about a dragon's biology. There was only one, highly possible, guess that came to mind. "Maybe the dragon died before it could be born and your husband has the souls of these eggs? What if they were all taken in as shadow soldiers?"

"Wouldn't their corpses still be inside the eggs, then?"

"They would."

Cha Hae-In was silent for a while at Sirka's confirmation, mixed in with a sigh. Aside from logical thinking of whenever or not the eggs had been nurtured, the mystery still lingered as to why they looked normal on the inside but were empty on the outside.

And also, what would be the reason the dragon soldiers were guarding these empty eggs?

"Let's look around for now."

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Cha Hae-In and Sirka began to touch all the remaining eggs. Unfortunately, there was no change as the eggs began to scatter and disappear one by one.

At the same time, Cha Hae-In was also coldly watching the behavior of the dragon soldiers.

'These eggs are the owners of the dragon soldiers, so why hasn't their number decreased?'

There was a slight connection though. As the numbers of the eggs decreased, the bloodlust of the dragon soldiers was becoming ever more present.

'Could they be from another owner? Maybe there are still some living eggs around here?'  
Thinking of many various hypotheses, Cha Hae-In continued to reduce the number of eggs.

And finally.

"This..."

She found it.

"Isn't this a bit small?"

Cha Hae-In's eyes sparkled when she found the ostrich-sized egg hidden among all the human-sized eggs. The egg also smelled of mana, a difference from all the other hollow ones. When she grabbed the egg, she could feel a fairly heavy weight on it.

**¡Aaaaa!**

The mana around the dragon soldiers also became extremely thick.

"Cha-cha! These guys are getting mad! We have to evacuate to a safer place—huh?"

[Purrr]

Out of nowhere, the shadow wyvern Kaisel, who had been sleeping quietly all this time, suddenly woke up.

[Kyaaa~]

Kaisel spread his wings wide while stretching on Cha Hae-In's shoulder and yawning. Then, he pulled the real dragon egg that was in Hae-In's hands into his arms, twisted himself into a coil and embraced it as if it was his egg.

"Ah.."

The bloodlust of the dragon soldiers suddenly faded in an instant. Cha Hae-In and Sirka looked around with puzzled expressions at the sudden change.

**Chuck! Chug!**

The soldiers all the sudden bolted towards them to kneel on one knee and lower their heads as they surrounded Cha Hae-In and Sirka.



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To be more precise.

[Purrr~]

They were kneeling down at Kaisei, who was cuddling the egg.

Seeing this, Cha Hae-In and Sirka muttered to themselves with bewildered expressions.

"I guess we can count this as a win, right?"

"Cha-cha, should I pray for this?"

"Yeah, let's tell Suho."

It seems they have found the last dragon egg in this entire universe.

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*Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo!*

Meanwhile.

[Little lord! The entire shore is surrounded in a whirlwind of sand!]

Haeundae was caught in an unexpected natural disaster, as Beru reported.

The sandy whirlpool wasn't the only thing to worry about as people got sucked downward. There was also a sandstorm upward that raged in all directions, as if it was a barrier.

'It's similar to the dungeon of Harmakan, but much more explicit.'

Harmakan, a member of the demonic tribe, had also placed a barrier around the entire village to create the 'instant dungeon'.

The barrier was so subtle that even those who entered wouldn't even notice it.

However, he didn't know if this was another kind of style or the demons that appeared this time had been clumsy with their magic, but they openly created a barrier that trapped people inside a sandstorm.

"Sung Suho!"

A voice called Suho from behind.

Lim Tae-Gyu, the guild master of the Reaper's guild and S class hunter, was running furiously through the sandstorm.

"Get out of the way!"

He said while hunting a magic arrow at the reaper's bow and aiming towards the center of the sandy vortex.

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**Kwa oh oh!**

The powerful magic arrows grazed Suho's body as they flew towards the center of the barrier.

**Ku kwa kwa!**

At that moment, one of the arrows pierced its target and exploded.

[Ahh!! How dare a measly human being!]

Screams echoed in all directions. So were the angry shouts of the demons heard.

"There you are!" Like an eagle that caught his prey, Lim Tae-Gyu's eyes sparkled as he rained down the magic arrows again.

*¡Pooh!*

*Kekekekeke!*

Countless skeletons also emerged from the sandstorm to attack Lim Tae-Gyu from all sides. He snorted with a laugh as he hit the skeletons that tried to disturb him with the reaper's bow.

*Kwajangchang!*

The reaper's bow, an S class weapon, was harder than other weapons, so he smashed the skeletons with a delightful ease.

"I only need this much to kill you!"

[It can't be.]

*!!!*

Lim Tae-Gyu rapidly alerted his surroundings to the eerie voice that came right behind him.

[You are quite strong for a human.]

Among all the hunters, the gloomy voice kept ringing exactly in Lim Tae-Gyu's ears.

[Oh well, it doesn't matter how much magic you have. Humans are just a weak race.]

'He' laughed at Lim Tae-Gyu.

[A human's soul is inferior.]

*Whoa!*

As soon as he finished speaking, the scenery changed in front of Lim Tae-Gyu's eyes.

[The Demonic Illusionist Javier uses the skill: Mirage]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Mirage?'

Suho gained two pieces of information thanks to the system's message. One, the culprit behind this situation was Javier, a magician from the demon tribe, and two, he could use a skill called 'Mirage'.

[Little lord! Beware of the illusions!]

Beru's urgent voice began to fade far away as the landscape around Suho's eyes changed.

\*\*\*\*

Javier was a magician from the demon tribe.

He never once doubted his victory. He had to win.

He had been experimenting with the souls of the people he collected in this beach, and as a result came to one simple conclusion.

'Humans are weak.'

The demonic tribe was a race that enjoyed doing various research on the nature of souls. To them, it was just an experimental material with an infinite potential. With their use they could create really interesting spells.

Although it might be terrible for the victims, 'Mirage' was a powerful illusion that brought out the most terrifying or intense moments from a target's memories.

Through his demonic magic, Javier had enjoyed the colorful fears hidden within the human's subconsciousness.

'They are quite an interesting race.'

Since humans were fundamentally weak, the fear they felt was more fundamental and primary than that of the other races.

'The other races only fear death at best.'

But look at the humans gathered in front of him! Look at the many colorful fears that they could express!

'For example... That one.'

"Honey."

"No, no, it can't be..."

Lim Tae-Gyu, who had the most magic among the hunters, fell into the greatest despair.

That was because his 'dead wife', no, the wife 'he killed with his own hands', appeared in front of him. His wife's body was enveloped in a blue smoke, burning her away.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Slowly, Lim Tae-Gyu's wife approached him with a sorrowful look on her face.

“Why are you looking at me like that? You were the one who killed me.”

“I'm sorry, I'm really sorry...”

‘Kehehe.’

How delightful it is to watch a soul struggle in despair!

Javier felt extreme pleasure while he appreciated Lim Tae-Gyu's despair and fear.

[Kahaha! They cannot resist their absolute fears, just look at how beautiful this is!]

S class or whatever, the soul was just another equally insignificant human soul, while his illusions were on another level from simple illusions. For Javier, he could bring out intense memories deeply engraved into the victim's soul and turn them into reality. It was to the point that the illusions could exert physical power on their own.

[This moment was bound to come, S class hunter, so don't struggle anymore and accept your demise.]

He mocked and giggled at Lim Tae-Gyu until a sudden chill made him turn his gaze quickly to somewhere else.

He couldn't help but doubt his eyes.

[That--What is that?!]

It was from the young hunter who caused that blizzard earlier. He, too, had been watching the illusion that was deeply engraved in his memory from afar.

And yet, something was strange.

[What the hell is that!?!]

A being in Suho's memory was slowly revealing itself, covered in the black void of the abyss itself.

# 167

*{Edit: This is Chapter 167 not 168. The actual chapter 168 is in my account bc for some reason it wont let me upload here so, will make the warning here in case i post 169 and it wont let me.}*

Looking back at the past, Suho's school days were always filled with boredom.

A square desk.

A square blackboard.

A square classroom.

A place where people who wore the same clothes gathered together.

A world where everyone learned the same thing.

This was all Suho remembered from his school days.

*How boring...* Looking back, there were many moments where he would always yawn and feel bored. *I need something...* Something with a little more heart beating. A nostalgic feeling kept telling him he once knew a lot of amazing things.

When that feeling came, he couldn't stand it anymore and then—

**Tick.**

Time stopped.

An unbelievable sight unfolded in Suho's eyes.

The students that walked out of school.

The students that were doing sports.

The car that passed through the driveway.

The people that passed through the sidewalk.

And the ball in mid-air.

Everything that once moved now stopped.

'That thing' appeared.

A gate.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

A round black hole suddenly morphed at the back of the classroom like a door made from pitch colors of the darkness that swirled, ready to suck anyone in who approached it.

This would have been enough to frighten a normal kid, but instead of crying or screaming, Suho put a hand on his chest.

**Badum, badum, badum!**

His heart was pounding.

Maybe, maybe he had been expecting something like this for a long time.

*Mom would always say I resemble dad.*

*If I were to think like him... what would he have done in this situation?*

The answer was within him all along.

Suho jumped into the gate without hesitation.

And so, arguably, the most intense and fierce moment of his entire life started like this. A terrifying dream.

**¡Aaaaa!**

**Kyaa oh oh oh!!**

**Kieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee...**

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

In said dream, Suho died and was injured countless times. Either way, he still ran forward to defeat the numerous magic beasts that attacked him.

Finally, when he reached the end, Suho would encounter **him**. He was a man who wore a hood in order to be unrecognizable. A man whose pressure suffocated all of Suho's body.

*But now I know. Who that man was.*

*Father?*

Suho couldn't help but be embarrassed to see his father's — Sung Jin-Woo's — appearance right in front of him.

He knows, *of course I know*, that this was all just an illusion.

It wasn't possible for his father, who was supposed to be in outer space right now, to turn up here. Then the one in front of him is a fake.

*But.*

He was still worried about him.

*Can I win against my father now?*

Suho gulped, swallowing some dry saliva.

Looking back, he was level 99 in his dream and yet he was still knocked out in one hit. His current level is even lower than that.

*But my father also won't be as strong as he was back then since he is just an illusion now.*

Suho was sure of it, there was no way for a mere demonic illusionist to produce the same amount of power the Shadow Monarch had. This is a good balance for him.

*But still, isn't this too much pressure for him to produce?*

Around him a merciless force surrounded the arena. Just how amazing was the magic of a demonic tribe member, that from the moment his father's illusion appeared, Suho's stats began to fluctuate like crazy? He knew it was clearly a fake, and yet Suho couldn't help but break out in a cold sweat at the pressure that weighed on his entire body.

[Hahaha ha! Why I never thought there would be someone who has such a good memory of the Shadow Monarch!]

Then, Javier's senses belatedly came back as he burst into madness. It was only at that moment when he realized what was going on. Javier pointed at Suho while shouting.

[You bastard! You must have encountered the Shadow Monarch somewhere before! How!? The Shadow Monarch is a nightmare in itself!]

Javier, the demonic illusionist, had only seen the Shadow Monarch once, even if it was from a distance. He was only able to survive that day because he ran away as soon as he saw **him**. However even from far off in the distance, the memory of that day was still a horrifying and cursed image engraved in his mind.

At the same time, seeing him again was nothing of a surprise.

This was the true aura of death that the Shadow Monarch exuded!

If only he could bring out the true extent of power he felt still engraved in his memory, *I will even be able to have the Shadow Monarch as my subordinate!*

Conjuring Memories. It was the type of illusion magic Javier had devoted his whole life to. Of course it won't be the exact thing, but if you can still succeed in projecting a version of the Shadow Monarch then your soul will achieve a tremendous level of transcendence in power!

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Unfortunately his illusion failed, or to be more precise he had only half-succeeded in creating the Shadow Monarch. His magic had completed the Monarch's appearance well, but his power was a fleeting essence compared to the real deal Javier had witnessed first-hand.

With such a small pool of data as materials, he hadn't been able to create an illusion of the Shadow Monarch before.

[And to think I would find more data this way!]

Although it was a well known fact that the Shadow Monarch had been living on earth for a long time, he didn't think that there would be a soul among the humans that knew the Shadow Monarch so up close!

Javier greedily gazed at Suho while licking his lips.

[You are mine now kid! I will bind your soul and use it as material to summon the illusion of the Shadow Monarch forever!]

In a cruel voice he commanded the Shadow Monarch who kept emitting a terrible aura.

[Listen Shadow Monarch! I, your master Javier, command you to kill that human in front of you and bring his soul to me as an offering!]

At those words, Suho raised the mana from his whole body with a nervous expression.

*Let 's do this.*

So far, the most effective countermeasure against the illusion was to directly aim at the illusionist instead. Unfortunately the illusionist never revealed himself openly. Only Javier's voice could be heard as he kept hiding somewhere else.

Suho tried to expand his sensory vision to capture his mana, but strangely he felt it all over the place.

"Honey..."

"Dear, I'm sorry... I did this to you, with my own hands..."

Javier was everywhere, in the fantasies of countless other hunters, even in the fantasy of Lim Tae-Gyu's wife, and the hunter could only face her with a tearful expression.

[Heh, you are quite quick-witted.]

Even the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo that stood in front of him was embedded with Javier's mana.

[All of these fantasies that you see here are me, even the Shadow Monarch that you summoned!]

Javier's laugh echoed in the distance.



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Until all of a sudden, a panicked voice came from Javier.

[Huh?!]

Suho also noticed something strange at the same time. His father— No, the fake Sung Jin-Woo. He who seemed like he was ready to launch an intense attack with such overwhelming power, suddenly looked at Suho's face and smiled.

Smiled as if he met a cute thing.

—So you're still weak.—

!?

In a moment, Suho felt something strange. The magic of the demons was truly something amazing if it was able to conjure the same atmosphere and voice of his real father. The only difference was that his father was an illusion attacking him in a dream.

However...

[Wait? What?! Why can't I move on my own?!]

Something appeared to be even more strange now, why was this? For some reason Javier's voice was greatly perplexed about the situation at hand.

—Hmmm.—

'Sung Jin-Woo' turned his attention away from Suho to look around the place with a chilled attitude

**Kwaaaaahhhh!!**

They were inside a violent sandstorm. All the hunters around them were facing an illusion with painful expressions. 'Sung Jin-Woo' finished searching the scene before nodding and opening his mouth again.

—Oh, so I'm an illusion right now.—

"Huh?"

[What the!?!]

Javier stood in shock as something unbelievable just happened. To think that the illusion has gained sentience about his own creation!

[Such a thing like this... It's impossible!]

—No, it's not.—

[!!!]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

—Nothing is impossible for me.—

At those words, Javier trembled, goosebumps appearing everywhere. Sung Jin-Woo's illusion was talking to him, looking straight at him even though he was hidden in the sandstorm.

'That man' smiled and asked Javier a question.

—Do you know how many demons have become my shadow soldiers so far?—

[Wait I...]

An ominous feeling came over Javier. It wasn't a question he wanted to hear the answer to as he immediately realized the intent behind it. Just how many of his own people died at the hands of the Shadow Monarch during the fierce war? How many of them were incorporated? How many of those soldiers were still studying and practicing witchcraft like a demon tribe?

And now that they've become servants of the Shadow Monarch...

—Because of them, I've gotten quite used to the Demonic Tribe's witchcraft.—

'Sung Jin-Woo' then expressed his sincere gratitude to Javier.

—But I guess I'll praise you. After all, your skills are quite useful in this situation.—

Suddenly, he looked up at the sky, obscured by a sandstorm where nothing could be seen. His unconcerned gaze quietly stared at the beyond, a vast universe that spread out farther than his own existence.

—Beru.—

[Kiehek!!]

Beru, who had disappeared after the sandstorm hit, suddenly reappeared through it. And upon recognizing his master, Sung Jin-Woo, he burst into tears.

[My liege!!]

An illusion of the real thing, however in Beru's eyes that were still connected to Sung Jin-Woo, he was able to find a trace of his sentence that was connected precisely through that illusion.

—Beru, you've lost all your strength.—

Sung Jin-Woo clicked his tongue as he recognized Beru's condition with a single glance.

—Well, it doesn't matter.—

Jin-Woo raised his hand and placed it on Beru's head.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

—Notice this, shadow soldiers share all senses with their monarch. That's the function in the 2nd Level of the Shadow Storage skill.—

He muttered this to Suho, who kept watching and listening.

—And when you combine the witchcraft of the Demonic Tribe in moderation this is also possible.—

**Fwa!**

Black energy started to swirl from 'his' hand and seep into Beru. Feeling such a familiar touch after a long time, Beru closed his eyes pleasantly.

**T-ring!**

[Your quest has arrived.]

"This is?"

Suho's eyes widened at the sudden pop up message from the system. Before checking the contents of it, he turned his gaze towards his father's illusion, who in response grinned back.

—It's a bit old but the quest were originally created this way.—

The level up system: a high level sorcery that had been created by the Great magician of the demon tribe, Kandiaru, had one purpose.

—You will be rewarded with the next skill of the Shadow Power.—

'Sung Jin-Woo said this to his son with a slightly mischievous smile.

—So prove your qualifications.—

[Do you accept this quest?]

(Y/N)

# 168

And at that moment:

**Ku Gugu Gugu Gugu!**

[Don't make me laugh! You dare to disobey me!? You who are a mere puppet born from my illusions!]

Javier shouted in a fit as he created a sandstorm to attack Sung Jin-Woo's vision.

[I'll get you!]

**Kwuaaaaang!**

The sandstorm turned into a giant hand, attacking him like a clutch. From that single Jin-Woo could feel the persistence of the demon they had taken as if his favorite doll right in front of his eyes.

[Become my puppet!]

To the demon's dismay, Sung Jin-Woo's illusion simply floated into mid air to avoid Javier's touch. With a relaxed look, he said to Javier.

—Are you going to be okay? I don't think you can afford to focus on me from now on. —

[What?!]

—My son just started his quest.—

His gaze turned to Suho, whose eyes were reading the contents of the quest.

[Emergency Quest! Prove yourself! The Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo welcomes his son to prove his qualifications! Defeat Javier: The Demonic Illusionist and awaken a new skill from the Shadow Power!]

At that moment Suho shouted, his eyes flashing intensely. "I accept!" And without hesitation, he jumped towards the sandstorm that attacked from all sides, to free his father.

[Use Skill: Storm Slash!]

**Kwah kwah kwah kwah kwah!**

His twin swords swung in a daze and ripping through Javier's grasp.

**Quarreung!**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

In that moment, an amazing sight unfolded. The sand that scattered and explored soon began to take the shape of numerous skeletons. "Wait, then all those skeletons from before..."

As if responding to Suho's realization, Sung Jin-Woo nodded.

—Yes, that's right. All of them are an illusion created by his magic.—

All those skeletons that appeared in Haeundae were nothing more than illusions created by Javier.

**Kiekekeke!**

The skeletons suddenly felt an instinct of protection and rushed to Suho all at once.

[No matter how strong you are, you can never win against my infinite number of illusions!]

Those illusions were also equipped with real physical power. An amazing ability, as expected of the illusionist from the demonic tribe. However, Suho didn't have a single change in his expression as he watched the skeletons rushing towards him ferociously.

"Gray." <sup>[1]</sup>

[The spiritual body of the Pet: Gray is being merged with the body of the priest.]

**Wah!**

Suho's hair began to flutter silver with the divine wind. Seeing this, Sung Jin-Woo's eyes widened as the memories came to mind.

— Hmm? That can't be...—

He found quite a strange sight. It was the protection of the Beast Monarch that he killed himself, embedded in his son's body. At the same time, Suho's movement rapidly accelerated.

[Use Skill: Grassland Wind.]

[Your speed has temporarily increased by 30%.]

[Your attack speed has temporarily increased by 30%.]

*Ruler 's Authority!*

Suho threw the swords he was holding in both hands as they surged towards the skeletons like beams of light, hacking them into pieces. At the same time, Suho also began to fiercely pour a series of punches with both fists.

**Chump chump chump chump chump!**

**Doo doo doo doo doo!**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

The skeletons were mercilessly destroyed as they shattered by the fierce attacks. Dozens or hundreds of skeletons disappeared without a trace in an instant.

*There are far too many of these guys.*

Even as they constantly rushed into groups, the skeletons couldn't buy time against Suho.

Sung Jin-Woo, who was watching the scene unfold, slightly frowned back at Suho.

—Hmm.—

Upon inspecting, he could not only feel the aura of the Beast Monarch in Suho's body, but there was also the Plague Monarch's aura as well.

—Just when did my son become the priest for dead Monarchs?—

It made him feel a little curious about what happened when he had gone missing. Suddenly, Sung Jin-Woo's gaze turned to Beru. Naturally, Beru had also been standing beside him with the very loyal appearance from earlier. A bloody gaze emanated from his narrowed eyes. If Beru had been his original size, such a stare would have looked threatening, but now Beru was so small that every expression he made was cute. Sung Jin-Woo smiled and placed his hand over Beru's head.

—Beru, I need to look into your memories for a moment.—

[As you command, my liege.]

Beru willingly closed his eyes and felt Sung Jin-Woo's hand on top of his head.

—Is that how it is?—

Sung Jin-Woo, who peeked into Beru's memories, tilted his head with a disapproving expression. Suddenly, he spread his hand in the air and began manipulating Javier's magic to his will.

**Pah! Papapa!**

Following his orders, complex magic circles appeared, an ominous light emerged and spun around the place. Alongside him, the sandstorm that swept the area began to change gradually, showing strange movements in its surroundings.

[What's happening!?!]

Javier was greatly taken aback by the sudden situation. His magic that had once been perfectly spread was now changing without his orders.

[How can this be possible!]

No matter how hard he tried, once the magic left his hands, it began to disintegrate all that he made. Sung Jin-Woo gave some words of comfort to him.

—There's nothing to worry about. I don't mean to damage your spell. If you think about it, i'm just a simple illusion, so I have almost no magic power over you.—

[Oh no...]

—Instead, I'm only trying to improve your magic a bit more.—

*That doesn't make any sense!*

Javier was astonished. How could that man, who was only an illusion, do these kinds of things?

*Just what kind of monster did I summon!*

Javier felt the fear of the unknown grasp him to an unimaginable degree. And, just as Jin-Woo had said, Javier's magic began to increase into a more perfect figure.

**¡Whaaa!**

[Huh uh huh!?!]

Javier was deeply perplexed by the sudden feeling of his powers increasing. Despite the obscure process, looking at the results, this was definitely a good thing for Javier.

[I don't know what the hell is going on...]

Javier grabbed the powers gifted by 'him'. Then, looking down towards Suho, no, all the other hunters including him, he mercilessly revealed his malevolence.

[Thank you for this! I'll use this power wisely!]

**Flash!**

[The level of the Skill: Mirage has increased.]

**Kwooooo Gogogo!**

The sandstorm intensified, and the power of the skeletons born of illusion became stronger.

—Come on, son.—

The illusion of Sung Jin-Woo that was looking at him from above, secretly raised the corner of his lips and crossed his arms.

—Since dad has laid the plate like this, why don't you use all of your strength now? Don't worry, dad will take of them.—

!

Suho's eyes widened at that moment. Despite the battle, his fierce gaze instinctively moved towards his father. 'them'. He realized what that word meant.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

The Itarim.

The apostles of the Itarim!

All this time Suho had suppressed his power without realizing it. He didn't want to be a burden to his father. He didn't want his father's enemies to discover that he was a descendant of the Shadow Monarch. So he had used the powers of the Shadows to a minimum.

And the reason was crystal clear.

*I had to do it.*

*For my father.*

*'Because I am my father's only weakness.'*

However, his father right now...

—Tsk. Just because I'm getting old doesn't mean I've grown gray hair.—

He was clicking the tongue at himself.

—No, just how old even are you that you are already worried about your parents?—

He reproached Suho in a tone that seemed to see through all the worries that he had been piling up until now.

—Suho, my son.—

He wasn't able to hide the cute and admirable smile from his mouth.

—Worries tend to happen, it's what parents do to their children.—

He laughed.

—Although it should be the other way around, the person above has to worry about the person below.—

His smile became darker.

**Goooooooo!**

Before he knew it, Sung Jin-Woo's momentum was taking over the entire area as if it was going to devour it.

—Listen closely.—

He began to scold his son for worrying about him.



—This is your dad whom you've never lived a single moment without until now. I'm not weak enough that I need a little kid like you to be worried about me.—

"..."

—That 's why...—

His father's voice resounded in a low tone.

—Stop worrying about this useless dad of yours.—

The moment he heard it, like a hook, something heavy inside of Suho had disappeared. At that time he realized why his father had appeared in Javier's illusion.

Mirage: A skill that revealed one's terrible memories strongly engraved inside the target's soul. The most terrifying thing about this skill was that it brought to life the darkest part of a person, a subject's most anxious and vulnerable memories, just as the current results prove.

The emotions he felt closest to his trauma that had been suppressing Suho's heart were those about his father.

*Because of me, my father will...*

*If my father gets caught because of me...*

*If I become a hostage, it will be a huge problem for him...*

*I am my father's only weakness...*

It was from those countless thoughts that the illusion had created his 'father'.

But now, his father had given him the permission to go all out.

Suho's eyes changed at that moment.

The corners of his smile rose.

A smile that resembled his father's.

A more innocent expression appeared on his face.

He stopped walking and looked ahead.

With a look that resembled his father's.

Suho opened his mouth.

"Arise." [2]

**Shuaaa!**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

At Suho's feet, his shadow soldiers all rose in unison. The shadow soldiers were covered with black mist all over their bodies.

**Aaaaahh!!**

They all stood up with Suho at the center and spewed vicious blood in all directions. Among them were Quay, Harmakan and Kira who had been traveling across the country to hunt down villains.

"Harmakan, create an instant dungeon."

[As you wish, master.]

**Flash!!**

When the order was given, Harmakan opened his arms and cast a spell.

[An open dungeon has been created.]

**Flash!**

At that moment, a transparent force field spread in all directions around Harmakan. The gigantic sphere dragged the entire sandstorm created by Javier into the Underworld. The same happened with all the hunters that were gathered, and so was Javier trapped.

—What a novelty. Using the instant dungeons for the purpose of trapping enemies.—

Sung Jin-Woo nodded as he saw the battle become a little bit more interesting. Javier on the other hand couldn't help but panic.

[This- this can't be?! Kandiaru's...]

Javier was horrified to realize that they had imprisoned him at a higher dungeon level than he himself could create. But that wasn't the only problem. Suho all the sudden had the same energy as the Shadow Monarch flowing through him.

[What, how could you!? No. Wait- you can't be!]

"I am."

Suho gladly answered the question as he let out an air he had been holding back.

"I am Sung Suho, son of the Shadow Monarch."

A message appears.

[You have learned 'Skill: Monarch's Domain' Lv.1]

**Hwaaaaa.**

Suho's shadow dyed the whole land in darkness.

1: The actual translation is [강신] Gangsin which is one of the processes in a ceremony to invite and receive a spirit in one's body that being with a spell or prayer, basically Suho merging with Gray to receive spiritual power.

2: Since the actual word is 'Wake up' I didn't know whether it was a good choice to leave it as Arise, or, because it's a new series with a new protagonist, a synonym like 'Awaken' would be better so that Arise can be Jin-Woo and Jin-Woo's only. For now I just left it to arise but idk leave thoughts if you want the change or the normal Arise :/ ...

# 169

Suho has achieved a new skill!

[Skill: Monarch's Domain' has been casted!]

The next step of his shadow abilities.

[The stats of the shadow soldiers fighting within your shadow have increased by 50%.]

**AAAAAAHHHHH!!**

The soldiers that stood in the shadow of Suho, dyed on all sides black, were enthralled by the seething thrill in their hearts and began to erupt in roars.

[This power—!]

Javier couldn't help but be shocked that something unbelievable had unfolded in front of his eyes! The realm of the Shadow Monarch was unfolding everywhere around him.

[Lies! This is all lies!]

He denied reality with all his might.

Yes, yes, this must all be lies! This was nothing but a high level illusion or something like that, right? It had to be. It had to be. After all, someone else holding the powers of the Shadow Monarch was impossible!

[The Shadow Monarch's power can only be inherited when the predecessor dies after all! So why!?!]

The King of death can't even die, so why?!

[You aren't even the Shadow Monarch!]

**Ko goo goo go goo goo!**

Feeling alarmed by the sight, Javier launched an onslaught of sandstorm attacks towards Suho. The illusions filled with physical strength all morphed into vicious monsters that ran towards him at the same time. ¿His reaction? Suho showed his teeth and smiled.

"You know a son resembles his father, right?"

Right. Ever since he was little, he could use the Ruler's Authority, but he wasn't a Ruler himself. And now he can wield the powers of a Monarch too? The only thing to do now was test the effect of this new ability.

Suho spoke up to the shadows, awaiting his commands.

"Soldiers, charge!"

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

They immediately charged.

[Mmooooooooooooo!!]

All of them sprung forward with powerful momentum, as if they had been yearning for this moment.

Although, compared to the shadow legion led by father, Suho's was only a fraction. Even against Javier's number of illusions attacking him, it was only at a modest degree.

But that was more than enough for him.

**Chump chump chump chump!**

Quay was a one-hit kill shadow spearman that rushed in and single-handedly hacked away at the entire field of illusions. His smile was confident as it crept along his lips.

[Hey let's make a bet! Whoever soldier kills the most is the captain!]

Harmakan's eyes shone insidiously at his words.

[Do not shed your words then! And let this be a great battle of might between us!]

Even if he was the strongest among the elite soldiers, he was treated as mediocre for quite a while now, so he accepted the match. With open arms, he began to cast a new spell.

[Come forth! Oh, phantoms stained by wrath!]

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Provocation of the Damned'.]

[Nearby enemies are ignited with hostility towards Harmakan.]

**Taktak Taktak Tak!**

All attacks from nearby enemies suddenly began to rain down on Harmakan.

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Damage Amplification'.]

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Thorn of Pain'.]

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Explosion'.]

However, he returned all the attacks right back at them.

[Hey! That's foul!]

Quay gnashed his teeth as he spurred on his attacks even more.

[Why do you fight like a tank even though you are a shaman!?!]

[Mmmmmooooooooo!!!!]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

In the meantime, the shadow minotaurs pounced through the ferocious sandstorm without hesitation. More than ever, they mercilessly crushed their enemies with fearsome momentum.

**Bang! Kwak!**

**Kwak kwa kwa Kwak!**

In the center of it all, Suho started to feel the effect of this new skill: Monarch's Domain. A Buff skill that strengthens shadow soldiers by a double margin. Not only that, but the greater the number of soldiers he had at his disposal, the greater the synergy was. He shuddered just by thinking about the number of his soldiers increasing.

*Yes, this is it.*

*—This is what a legion is.—*

As if reading his thoughts, Suho heard his father's voice. Looking back, Jin-Woo was smiling with satisfaction as he watched the battlefield where the shadow soldiers ran amok.

*—Now you are acting like my son.—*

*Let's do this.*

Sung Jin-Woo waved his hand into the air, manifesting Suho's status window right in front of him. In it were all the results of his work and choices that has led up to Suho's progression until this point. He skimmed through the contents and, at last, nodded."

*—Raising your strength stat was a good choice since you must first become strong in order to reap powerful soldiers.—*

Although this wasn't too much of a good thing, as he saw that the strength status was extremely high compared to his current level. In fact, his level-up system seemed to be half broken. The reason for this had been that at first, the system's goal was to grow the player into a perfect vessel for the Shadow Monarch, but that reason has been lost since.

*I can't believe it, you've grown this much by using a half-baked system that doesn't even give you a job change quest.*

He could tell just how far Suho was willing to go just by looking at this. However, going forward, the direction of the growth will have to change slightly now that he has earned the skill: 'Monarch's Domain'.

*Although, you won't need my advice on this.*

After all, the best path is one that you carve out through your choices and keep going.

*—Well, Suho's side is over, now let's go take care of the other.—*

Jin-Woo said as he suddenly turned his gaze to another place, disappearing on the spot.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

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Hot.

It felt so hot.

His whole body burned.

But he couldn't let go upon realizing that the wife he killed with his own hands must have felt those same flames on her skin.

"Agh! I'm sorry... I couldn't help you... to save Do-Gyun..." Lim Tae-Gyu cried as he embraced his wife in a hug, the blue flames consuming them.

He knew. He knew this was all an illusion, but sometimes there were times when he wished to be deceived, even though he knew the truth. Besides, who knows? This might not just be a mere illusion. Maybe it was the call of his wife's spirit. If there was even the slightest chance of it being true, then he thought he wouldn't mind dying like this alongside his wife.

[Keehehhehehe!]

Javier burst into laughter upon seeing that.

[Oh, how nice this is!]

An enemy or an ally.

He had no idea what the Shadow Monarch's ulterior motives were. His own sorcery which the man had fiddled with, had developed into a more perfect structure than before, and this was the result:

—Honey, I don't want to die. I need more mana.—

Lim Tae-Gyu, engulfed in the flames, kept obediently, giving all of his mana to his wife's request.

An S-rank's magic power was truly a massive amount, and unlike the other hunters, it had a strong enough momentum that seemed to never run out no matter how much it scooped out. Through Lim Tae-Gyu's wife, Javier could extract the intact magical power in him. He wasn't the only one too, as the same thing happened to all the other hunters trapped under his illusion.

[All of this is now my power!]

Javier trembled in excitement, gnashing his teeth as he glared at Suho, who kept mercilessly destroying his illusions on the other side.

[I don't know what you are trying to do, but from now on this battle will be different!]

Javier finally lifted himself up. He burned all the mana that had gathered into his core and started to perform a shamanic transformation directly into his body.

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[Demon Illusionist Javier uses the 'Skill: Mirage'.]

His illusion started inflating his size. At the same time, the corners of his mouth cracked into a vicious smile.

[I'll show you what true horror is.]

Javier began to remember the existence that he encountered while passing through the cracks between dimensions. A great and terrifying being!

[Oh, I'm looking forward to this, just how far can I imitate such a great power!]

**Whoaaaaaaaagh!**

Javier's gigantic body split itself open, revealing dozens of tentacles that sprang out in all directions. The immense body finally broke through the sandstorm and appeared in front of Suho.

[Javier: The Demonic Illusionist.]

"... A kraken?"

[Little lord, be careful! This figure is definitely one of the Itarim's apostles! It seems that it must have met one while wandering around the dimension!]

Beru quickly explained to Suho.

"You mean he imitated an Itarim's apostle as an illusion?"

Suho glared back at Javier, who had transformed into a kraken-like figure with narrow eyes. Around him, the flow of mana he felt was unusual, so even if it was only mimicking his appearance, he couldn't dismiss the rarity so easily.

[It could be at least A rank, no, maybe S rank.]

"And he is still getting stronger."

Suho sensed all the mana overflowing around the place and clenched his teeth. He noticed that from this point on, the real quest that his father gave him was about to start.

*But was this possible?*

This wasn't the first time he faced an S rank beast. However, he had fought them alongside his other teammates, along with S rank hunters themselves. This was not the case anymore.

*I have to fight it off alone.*

Once again, he thought, was this possible?

It wasn't the time to speculate on such a possibility, because the conclusion had already been decided from the beginning.



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**Phua!**

His body moved first.

[Everyone, make an opening!]

**Chaw chaw chaw chaw chaw!**

The shadow soldiers started to repel all the illusions that tried to block Suho, who rushed towards Javier and jumped along the path they pierced for him.

**Badum! Badum! Badum!**

The pulse in his heart felt as though it was about to explode.

**Das! Das! Das!**

As he stepped up into the air, Suho's body rushed in front of Javier in an instant.

[Hah! You bastard!]

Just then, Javier's tentacles appeared over his head.

Suho couldn't avoid them.

**BAM!**

With a huge explosion sound, the tentacle crushed Suho to the ground.

[¡Hahahaha!]

Javier was ecstatic.

However, even with such a vigorous attack...

['Skill: Tenacity' has reduced your damage.]

Suho's body stood firmly underneath it.

**Tug.**

His hand grabbed the huge tentacle, getting bigger by the second.

**Whooooaaagh!**

[The 'Skill: Giant's Armor' is being used.]

Suho's body swelled up as he grabbed the tentacle and swung it.

**Whoop—**

[?!?]

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**Fwuaaa!**

[Heok?!]

Javier's body flew through the air before landing again on the floor.

[What kind of power is this?!?!]

Javier burst out in amazement, forgetting his own pain.

Even Sung Jin-Woo acknowledged the path he had chosen to walk.

One of pure strength.

[Strength: 140.]

That's right, Suho's strength, in terms of its stats, could be compared to the strongest in all mankind.

The Goliath, Thomas Andre.

He elevated his fist, concentrating all that power in a single punch. Suho's glowing eyes looked straight into Javier's own gigantic ones.

[The 'Skill: Rigid Body Art.' Is being used.]

**Shooaang!**

Black mist wrapped around his fist.

[Moooooooo!!]

His shadow Minotaur transformed into a gauntlet and wrapped itself around Suho's fist as he said,

"This will hurt a bit."

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**Huaaaa!**

A black steam rises. The shock wave spreads like ocean tides around the place where Suho's fist struck.

[Ka-heok!]

Javier's scream of pain pierces the air, his heavy body trembling terribly. This was the start of Suho's earnest attacks.

**Bang! ¡Pooh!**

**Kwah kwah kwah kwah!**

One shot, two shots, all of them heavy attacks. Suho's fists that are wrapped in giant gauntlets start beating Javier mercilessly.

[Ak-This! This!]

But Javier wasn't alone in the suffering.

**Kwah kwah kwah kwah kwah!!**

Dozens of giant tentacles rained down from all sides, fiercely striking upon Suho's body. However, this didn't stop Suho at all. He kept enduring all the brutal attacks with his bare body and focused solely on attacking repeatedly.

*A head-to-head match.*

Although, matter how tough one's skin is, it doesn't completely reduce all the pain.

*It hurts. Everything hurts.*

His intestines are shaking.

He can feel the blood rising in his mouth.

His HP is decreasing steadily in real time.

Suho still didn't stop, and he had no intention of doing so anytime soon.

*This is a test.*

*My father's watching.*

*Because I was given permission to leave the work behind and run amok as much as I wanted!*

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*So I'll show you.*

*I will proudly defeat the quest my father gave me!*

Suho tore off the tentacles wrapped around his body with force and clunked the demon, launching yet another attack.

**Bang!**

With his strength and tenacity, those fierce attacks that didn't retreat even a single inch were poured into each other.

The appearance of this fight was unlike any other raid from an ordinary Hunter.

This was a bloody battle between two monsters.

And they only had one thing in common: They were not alone.

**Kiekiekekekeke!**

Skeletons attacked from all sides to grab at Suho's ankles. Suho ignored all of that and kept attacking Javier. After all, his side was following the same strategy.

**Whoosh — Bang!**

Just in time, Quay's spear had flown through the air and hit Javier's eyeball.

[Aagh!!!]

Enraged, Javier grabbed Quay's body and mercilessly crushed him.

**BAM!**

[!!!]

Javier's tentacles, which turned Quay's body into mush, ruptured at the exact time.

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Thorn of Pain' on all shadow soldiers.]

[All pain and damage that Quay receives is shared with the attacking target.]

All damage received by the Shadow soldiers is reflected back. Of course the results weren't exactly the same because of the differences in defense and stamina, but Javier had still lost one tentacle due to that.

**Pwah—!**

Furthermore, Javier's wounds were being forcibly opened, black blood gushed out like a fountain.

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[Skill: Damage Amplification' increases the damage relieved by 'Javier: The Demon Illusionist'.]

Javier mended his wounds and gnashed his teeth. On the other hand, Harmakan happily mocked him with the most sinister grin. Joy and sorrow crossed between those two.

[You traitor! Even though you are known as a great sorcerer in the demonic tribe! You aren't even the least bit ashamed!]

**Bang!**

Suho's attack exploded again towards his muscle.

Javier gnashed his teeth again and growled.

[Cough! That's quite... strong...but it's still useless!]

Nothing has changed. Thanks to Sung Jin-Woo, Javier's confidence had overflowed due to the advanced magic.

[Muahaha! Pour as much strength into it as you want! The more you do that, the faster you will get tired, but even at this moment, I'm constantly filled with magical energy! Muahahahaha!!]

His words roared through the sandstorm.

[In this place, I'm invincible!]

"Invincible..."

At that, Suho showed his teeth and replied. He didn't know much about witchcraft like his father, but he could roughly understand it.

"...So you are still gathering mana from the hunters that have fallen into your illusion, like a battery charge?"

Suho smiled and continued.

"Then I'll just send my shadows to cut your power off."

He will need to get rid of the battery first.

\*\*\*\*\*

Fire.

"Ouch... Ka- Agh..."

Numerous hunters struggled inside the summoning circle. Lim Tae-Gyu, who was the strongest among them, was still crying while holding on to his deceased wife.

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However, his tears had vaporized and flown away as soon as they came out. He was caught in a fierce heat, already on the verge of passing out from the severe burns of his body.

In his heart, he only wished he could die alongside his wife, but the S rank magic within him was preventing that, protecting his life at all costs.

[Honey, I want to live, I need you to give me more mana.]

The wife that he held in his arms, whispered to him with an affectionate smile.

[I need more mana.]

He gave in more strength with the hands that hugged her tightly, as if he would never let go until all of his magic had run out.

[Honey, let's die together this time.]

Lim Tae-Gyu thought himself to be so lucky due to all the mana reserves he had. As long as the magic coursed through his veins, the illusion will never end. He already knew that death was waiting for him the moment his fantasy came to an end, but even so, the thought of this being his atonement for killing his wife made him feel comfortable.

In a way, the burning pain in his body was also beautiful on its own.

How long has it been since he heard the kind voice of his wife that kept whispering in his ear.

[Honey, let's die together this time.]

*Tsk.*

[They all say the same thing.]

!?

Suddenly, a clicking sound appeared from the empty air. Something unbelievable unfolded in front of Lim Tae-Gyu's eyes.

**Slice!**

His wife's throat was cut.

[Ah...]

"...Ah?"

In an instant, Lim Tae-Gyu's eyes were stained with astonishment.

Tuk tuk...

His wife's head rolled on the floor.

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The fire roared. Her figure disappeared in the blue flames as if it never existed in the first place. At the same time, countless stabs began to hack into the body that Lim Tae-Gyu's wife was holding.

**Slice! slice! slice!**

His wife's body began to disappear from his arms.

"Ah!— No. No no no..."

Lim Tae-Gyu searched for her in his hands, kneeling in confusion as the flames scattered.

In front of the empty eyes, an appearance slowly revealed itself.

Kira the shadow assassin.

He was looking down at Lim Tae-Gyu and clicking his tongue, holding the dagger that killed Lim Tae-Gyu's wife.

[Finally. Ugh, why is an S-rank hunter like you so obsessed with the illusion of memory now? What's so important about this love?]

"...You!"

Lim Tae-Gyu's eyes were bloodshot when the existence of the murder of his wife appeared for a moment.

His bloodlust soared.

Immediately, his powerful hand reached out and grabbed Kira by the neck.

Kira was helplessly grabbed by the hand, breaking his neck.

But he still didn't die, even with a broken neck.

[Hmm. As expected of an S-rank]

Rather, he mocked him in a calm tone.

[If you still have this strength, why don't you go find your son instead of dealing with me?]

!!!

Lim Tae-gyu's eyes widened at the words.

[What kind of trauma do you think your son is dealing with right now?]

".....!"

At the word "son" that flowed out of Kira's mouth, his eyes, which had fallen into madness, returned quickly.

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"Oh, no! Do-Gyun!"

[It's that way.]

Lim Tae-Gyu ran without hesitation in the direction pointed by Kira.

Kira, who was left behind, looked back at the hunter, shrugged his shoulders with an expressionless thought.

[.....Parents like that exist after all, huh?] (1)

*I think I'm the only one who doesn't have good parents.*

*Anyways...*

[Hold him well because he... is someone I can't chase.]

Kira said that as he hid himself in the air again.

At the same time he also visited the visions of the other hunters and began to murder them relentlessly. Kira killed regardless of the will and feelings of the people who were stuck in that illusion. All of it done in a brutal manner.

\*\*\*

During that time Lim Do-Gyun was... running away again today.

This time from the vision of his mother chasing her.

[Do-Gyun...]

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

[My son...]

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

Running and running.

He did his best to run away just like those other times when he was being trained by Ammut.

Lim Do-Gyun's running speed was already far beyond the level of an E-class hunter.

However, his mother's vision, which he created, was following him at the same pace.

*I remember being chased by my mother.*

The image deeply embedded in Lim Do-Gyun's memory was reflected.

Watching the fierce and endless chase in the sandstorm, Kira gave up saving Lim Do-Gyun early on and turned his back somewhere else.



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He thought it would be more efficient to get other hunters at that time.

Instead, he passed on Lim Do-Gyun to his father, Lim Tae-Gyu.

"Oh, no....."

Lim Tae-Gyu, who found Lim Do-Gyun as Kira intended, had no choice but to make a desperate look. "What the....."

His son was being chased "again."

From one's own wife.

From his mother.

And "Again, like then," Lim Tae-Gyu had a crossroads of choice.

He has to kill his wife himself to save his son.

*Of course, I knew it in my head.*

The answer is the same as back then.

*Rather, it's only my wife's illusion now, so the choice is clearer than back then... No, even then, my wife had already turned into a Mist Burn.*

However, sometimes it is still difficult to make a decision even if you know it with your head.

"Do-Gyun.....!"

But just like then.

He did not hesitate.

**¡Woosh!**

Lim Tae-Gyu's body bounced forward.

After that, Lim Do-Gyun ran far away.

But suddenly he noticed something

*Wait, what's going on here?*

He saw quite a formidable sight up ahead.

"How?!"

"Wasn't Do-Gyun just an E-rank hunter??!"

The distance was getting shorter and shorter between them, but by no means was this a normal pace.

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"Cough!"

In case Do-Gyun was caught and spotted, he eventually raised the bowstring.

His aim is set directly at the center of his wife's heart, which closely followed Lim Do-Gyun by a narrow margin.

*No, that's not my wife.*

"It's a Mist Burn."

A human being turned into a mist bun is no longer a human being.

It's an illusion. It's just that!

**Swiish!**

The bowstring is released, and the magic arrows are fired, blown away.

They pierced the Mist Burn's heart. Lim Do-Gyun, who stopped running only then, breathed heavily and looked back.

"Oh, Father...?"

And when he found Lim Tae-Gyu, he opened my eyes wide.

Lim Tae-Gyu, who was relieved at that appearance, collapsed on the spot, but his eyes were still looking at his son.

"...Are you hurt anywhere?"

Tears began to well up in his eyes as a sense of relief crashed down on him.

Meanwhile, another illusion was looking from above at the whole scene that played out.

– Hmm.

Sung Jin-woo was watching Lim Do-Gyun with an interesting expression.

– I didn't expect to see this.

–...Well I was once an E-rank hunter. So, no wonder this scene felt so familiar.

Sung Jin-Woo smirked. Suddenly, his hand manipulated a new magic wand in the air, out of nowhere opening a new gate.

[Would you like to enter the Shadow Dungeon?]

(Y/N)

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1: In case anyone forgot, Kang Tae Shik /Kira, had an abusive father.

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[You have entered the Shadow Dungeon.]

In the rigid body training camp, Ammut, who was sitting with his back leaning in the depths of the pyramid, opened his eyes.

[... An uninvited guest has arrived.]

**Shuaaa!**

Suddenly, a dimensional door seemed to open, and a tremendous presence stepped into the shadow dungeon. But why? There was nothing unnatural about him so as to be called an intruder. 'He' opened the door so naturally as if he had entered his own house and appeared in front of Ammut.

[You... Who are you?]

Ammut bared his teeth at the man. The moment the giant crocodile man stood up, a tremendous sense of intimidation overwhelmed the man.

**¡Kuuuu!**

But he was calm, as if he didn't mind that kind of intimidation. He looked over Ammut's figure with rather interesting eyes and nodded.

-You are Ammut, right?

[...]

Ammut hesitated at the strange atmosphere he felt from the man. The man looked at him and did not speak. His gaze was not on his face, but on his head, as if there was something there.

[Wait a minute you...]

Ammut belatedly noticed that the black energy flowing from the man was oddly similar to Sung Suho, and his eyes lit up.

[Are you the Shadow Monarch?]

-No, well more or less like that.

[What?]

-I think you know.

[What are you talking about?]

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Ammut frowned at the ambiguous answer. However, despite such a reaction, Sung Jin-Woo's face made eye contact with Ammut and smiled faintly.

-Magically speaking, I am rather similar to you.

[...!]

At those words, Ammut's eyes widened. As if it was an expected reaction, Sung Jin-Woo's face turned his gaze to the surroundings with a calm expression. His gaze pierced the shamanic circle of Kandiaru carved into this pyramid.

**Crackle! Crack! Crack!**

Following that line of sight, numerous incantation circuits etched throughout the pyramid flickered and radiated light.

[Hey! You can't...]

Sung Jin-Woo, who was appreciating the result of the circuit diagram, opened his mouth.

-I am a false personification, an illusion, made by magic just like you. It's something similar to an avatar or an NPCs, but in the end, they all mean the same thing.

[...]

Due to Ammut's appearance, Jin-Woo was reminded of Baran, the demon king, whom he encountered a long time ago on the top floor of the demon castle dungeon. The king of demons, the monarch of white flames, Baran. Baran was the only non-living Monarch he encountered. To be more precise, Baran had already been killed by Ashbon, the first Shadow Monarch, before he met Sung Jin-Woo. Only the soul was recreated in Kandiaru's hands and used for the level up system. However, Baran, the demon king who was created in this way, did not reach his original power at all. It was because the 'primitive darkness', which is the source of the power of monarchs, had escaped.

- But I'm curious. How long have you been stuck like this?

[Grrr?]

At those black eyes that seemed to see right through him, Ammut smiled and opened his mouth.

[Well, I don't remember, because you can't see the flow of time here.]

- Do you want me to kill you?

[What? Huhuhuhu! That has to be one of the funniest jokes I've heard lately!]

At that, Ammut gave a self-deprecating chuckle.

**Quang!**

He swung his huge arm and smashed the wall next to him. The bricks collapsed around it, creating a huge hole. Curiously, after a while, the hole in the wall began to repair itself.

[Do you see it?]

Ammut's eyes looked straight into Sung Jin-Woo's.

[Even if you are the real Shadow Monarch, you can't kill me. Because this is my grave and at the same time it is a part of myself.]

- It's a spell that automatically recovers even if it's destroyed.

Sung Jin-Woo nodded at those words, his pupils growing. Although, even if it was impossible for him right now, it wouldn't be a difficult problem if he was his 'real' self. However, Ammut didn't really want to be killed by him in the first place, so he decided to keep quiet about this to Sung Jin-Woo's vision and look another way.

Jin-Woo also went back to his first priority, checking this place, including the pyramid that does not exist in Sung Jin-Woo's memory.

This place was, so to speak, the legacy of Kandiaru. There must have been several experiments in the process of developing the level-up system, and this pyramid must have been one of them. What he was curious about was, how the hell did this huge shamanistic device come into the shadow of Sung Suho?

*'It's a system that automatically recovers even if it's destroyed.'*

Soon, Sung Jin-Woo realized the reason.

... Could it be that the level-up system, which has lost its purpose and is incomplete, is working to restore itself?

In fact, the reason for the existence of the level up system has long since disappeared. Because it has already achieved its goal a long time ago. Therefore in this situation, the level-up system that the new player Sung Suho reactivated began to repair itself on its own in the same shape that it had been once before.

*No, to be precise...*

-The system is reforming itself to suit the changed situation, right?

The purpose of the level up system was, of course, 'to make the player a vessel for the Shadow Monarch'.

However, Sung Suho could not become a Shadow Monarch no matter what. If so then, what is the purpose of the system?

-Could it be a side quest of sorts?

The level up system could be supplementing itself for Sung Suho's future job change. Having this in mind, Sung Jin-Woo made a satisfied expression.

The existence of an NPC called Ammut and all the results of interpreting the inscriptions inscribed on this pyramid proved it.

- That 's great!

When he finally realized that fact, he burst into laughter. Now he was anxious and excited about what kind of job his son will get. After all, if you look at this, isn't it not very different from the worries of ordinary parents?

Although...

- I'm sure I know what to do.

Sung Jin-Woo had a smile on his face as he organized his thoughts.

**Pshuk!**

Suddenly, his body shook, about to dissipate, as if he was a radio wave that had lost its frequency. Ammut, who had been watching the scene from the front, opened his mouth with a chuckle.

[You seem to be far luckier than me. To be able to move freely out of your own summoned realm, even if it's only for a moment. Although that seems to be the end here.]

**Pshuk!**

Sung Jin-Woo's vision looked down at his flickering hands as if they would disappear at any moment and murmured.

-I know. I'll have to go back soon and I checked everything I needed to see here anyways.

As he gestured into the air, a system message appeared.

[Are you sure you want to leave the Shadow Dungeon?] (Y/N)

Ammut asked as he watched as he turned without hesitation and walked towards the door of shadows that appeared in front of him.

[By the way, why did you come here?] -

Why? I came because I wanted to help my son with something.

[Grrruk? So, did it work?]

-Yes. Quite a lot.

[For example?]

At Ammut's question, Sung Jin-Woo's vision reached out and touched the air.

**Pabababat!**

At that gesture, the runes engraved on the pyramid began to emit light all at once. Sung Jin-Woo said to Ammut, who was standing in the center of the splendid shaman formations as always:

-Ammut, your soul imprisoned here has been interlinked with the real soul in the afterlife sea, just like mine is right now.

[...And what does that mean?]

-If you want, you can now become a shadow soldier as much as you like.

[...!]

Realizing what the words meant, Sung Jin-Woo continued to speak with a mischievous smile toward Ammut, whose eyes widened.

-You don't want to rot in this prison forever, do you? In that case, it means you will become my son's soldier. This way my son...

[Only when he is strong enough to beat me! For now he has to become stronger, much more than he is now!]

**Quadduk!**

In an instant, Ammut's expression turned extremely eager, and he clenched his two huge fists. He slammed his fists together, baring his teeth ferociously.

[Leave it to me. I will double or even triple the intensity of daily quests in the future.]

...I'll give him some health potions later.

Sung Jin-Woo became a little anxious at the overflowing enthusiasm that seemed to explode off Ammut. But if Suho can endure that training and reap the real Ammut as a shadow soldier. It was clear that the Legion of Guardians would have a tremendously higher power than now.

- Oh, and one more thing.

**Snap!**

When Sung Jin-Woo snapped his fingers, the shaman formation that he had manipulated in advance began to work in earnest.

**¡Koo-goo-goo-goo!**

[ ... !]

Ammut looked bewildered as the entire pyramid suddenly swayed as if it were about to collapse. Since he was one body with the pyramid, he must have noticed that the size of this pyramid is getting bigger and bigger until finally—



**¡Paaas!**

From the top of the pyramid a beam of black light shot up vertically from its pointed center. The light penetrated even the walls of the dimension and spread vertically toward the distant universe.

[What is this!]

- This is a kind of insurance. It has nothing to do with you, so don't worry about it.

Leaving those words behind, Sung Jin-Woo went back to where he came from.

[He just...]

Ammut just stared at the place where he disappeared with a dejected expression.

*'How can a mere illusion have so much power.'*

In his many years of life, Ammut had thought about it from time to time. If, by chance, he, the strongest beast, followed the iron body monarch had participated in the war together. Maybe we could have won the war.

[In reality, nothing would have changed.]

\* \* \*

[You have exited the Shadow Dungeon.]

The moment Sung Jin-Woo returned to Suho's side, Suho's battle was also coming to an end.

**Tear! Rip! Tear!**

Suho's strong hands ripped off all of Javier's tentacles and grabbed the body hiding in the illusion by the neck.

[Kuh! hHow can this...] Javier, the magician of the Demonic Tribe, who boasted tremendous magic, was just an ugly skeleton. Between those white ribs, Javier's soul was emitting an evil light.

[This is nonsense... !]

Javier gritted his teeth and glared at Suho. Thanks to the activities of the shadow assassin Kira, the hunters who were bound by the illusion were getting out one by one. From that, Javier's magical power, which seemed infinite, eventually showed a limit, and his illusion gradually lost its power. However, Suho was hesitant to strike the final blow even though he had grabbed him by the nape of his neck. The reason is of course...

-What are you doing? You won't finish him?

"...father."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Suho's eyes shook at the sight of his father approaching. That feeling was admirable, but what came out of Sung Jin-Woo's mouth was the same rebuke as before.

- Just kill them. Don't worry, dad will come back.

Suho's mouth was forced shut. He pierced Javier's ribs and destroyed his soul.

**BANG!**

[You have killed Xavier, the magician of the demon tribe.]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

-----

A/N Oh goodness i'm sorry I credited so late but thank you u/Oblapoliveira [OblapOliveira](#) for the chapters and again really sorry for not crediting you, didn't know about the printing process so thanks a lot now the chapters can come out faster this way and i'll be sure to thank you in the next chaps that i will upload later

# 172

[Congratulations on completing this quest.]

Suho's whole body was filled with strength. He had just leveled up five times. It seemed that even the vast amount of mana that Javier had absorbed from others had been restored and the experience gained.

[Your quest reward has arrived.]

[Do you wish to check your reward?] (Y/N)

Instead of accepting the reward, Suho hurriedly looked for his father's illusion.

"Father... ..!"

**Shuaaaaa...**

When Javier died, all the illusions he created, including the sandstorm that covered the area, were turned into light powder and scattered. Sung Jin-Woo's illusion was not much different. However, even as his body scattered and disappeared he seemed relaxed.

-There's no need to make a fuss about it. I'm just an illusion right now.

Then, he raised his head and looked up at the sky.

- I'm actually doing well up there. Oh, although I've been a little busy since someone has been away lately.

[Kiehehehehe! My Liege! Here is this disloyal sinner! please forgive me!!!!]

At those words, Beru fell on his knees in front of him and began to weep.

[I also have a strong desire to go back, but I don't have enough magic power, so there's no way for me to go back!]

-That's alright. If that's why you can't come back, I'm less worried.

Although Sung Jin-Woo is now an illusion, he was in a state of sharing consciousness with the real Sung Jin-Woo by interlocking his soul. By using Javier's witchcraft against him, he turned himself, who was only an illusion, into a kind of avatar, the incarnation of the real Sung Jin-Woo. Thanks to this incident, the real Sung Jin-Woo in space can also know that Beru, who was sent to Earth, safely released the seal of Suho.

He was worried that Beru could still not reach Suho due to some kind of obstruction, but this time, that worry was resolved.

-Rather...

Seong Jin-Woo's gaze looked at the little Beru lying flat on the floor and said.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

-I think it would be better for you to remain on Earth for a while.

[Kieek?! Is that okay?]

Beru's eyes widened. The war with outer space was indeed fierce and in a tight balance. That's why the vacancy of his corps' commander had been a huge burden to Sung Jin-Woo. [But what about the balance of the war!]

-Ah, it's okay. I recently acquired a useful soldier.

[...?!]

How shocking Sung Jin-Woo's answer was, Beru froze on the spot with his mouth wide open.

-Of course, the sooner you return the better, but it seems that Earth isn't as relaxed as I thought.

While he was saying this, Sung Jin-Woo's body was already half scattered.

-I don't have much time. Sung Jin-woo immediately turned his head and looked at the remains of Javier, whom Suho had just killed. A skeleton with broken ribs. A message floated above the shadow.

[The mana is contaminated and cannot be extracted.]

Looking at the message, Sung Jin-Woo calmly explained to Suho to listen.

-Among the magic beasts(1), there are sometimes those that are impossible to extract, like demons.

At those words, Suho put on a sad expression. As Sung Jin-Woo said, Javier's soul was impossible to extract like the souls of demons. It was said that he could not be made into a shadow soldier like Harmakhan.

-Either way, you won't be able to use this guy.

Sung Jin-Woo stretched out his scattered hands and grabbed Javier's soul.

-So I'll use him instead.

**Shuank!**

Javier's mana-tainted soul was caught in his hand and forcibly lifted up. Then, as if he had noticed the fate that was about to come upon him, Javier's soul began to let out a horrifying scream.

**¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!**

How dare you do that! This is impossible!

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

–I've already said, nothing is impossible.

Sung Jin-Woo raised the corners of his mouth as he looked at the black shadow struggling to get out of his hand. Javier's soul trembled at the terrible sense of contempt. The illusion created by one's magic has, on the contrary, taken one's own soul!

–I'm sure you know. Magicians who have been accumulating magic for a long time like you, on the contrary, can also be very good materials for magic.

Seong Jin-Woo said that and performed the final spell using Javier's soul.

**Ching!**

Suddenly, a net-like shaman's circle unfolded from his hand and tied up Javier's struggling soul.

**¡Aaaaaaaaaa!**

The shamanic formations began to become denser and compressed into smaller ones. Javier's screams grew quieter and quieter until finally they stopped being heard at all. In Sung Jin-Woo's hand, a jewel the size of a fist was being held.

-Now, here's your gift.

**swish**

[You have obtained 'Item: Javier's Soul Stone'.]

Suho looked at the jewel Sung Jin-Woo gave him and made a puzzled expression.

"This..."

[Item: Xavier's Soul Stone]

[Difficulty to obtain: ??]

[Type: Jewelry]

[A jewel made by compressing a demonic soul.]

-It's a safety measure just in case, so put it in your inventory.

“Safety measure?”

-Yes. Seeing how you fight... There is something I'm concerned about.

Sung Jin-Woo smiled bitterly and looked at Suho's face. He felt like he wanted to explain something more, but nothing came out of his mouth. No one knows the future. The son walks in the footsteps of his father, but the road was never the same to begin with. Because the son's future was to be chosen and determined by the son himself...

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

*'Rather than pointlessly nagging them, it's probably better to cheer them on.'*

Sung Jin-Woo brushed off all the countless words that popped into his head.

-So, Suho.

Then, holding Suho's shoulder with his scattered hand, he said.

-I leave this place to you.

“Yes, Father.”

Suho's eyes were burning quietly as he nodded heavily. Sung Jin-Woo had a satisfied look on his eyes as his body dissipated into the air.

**Woosh...**

Eventually, even the hand that had patted Suho's shoulder turned into powder of light and scattered and disappeared. At that moment, the whole sky collapsed.

[The instant dungeon is unlocked.]

**Pachangchang!**

Harmakan's barrier disappeared. The boundary between the inside and outside of the barrier collapsed and the civilians outside the barrier finally appeared. At the same time, the hunters who were swallowed up by the sandstorm appeared in the field of vision of the civilians.

“¡Whoaaaa!”

A moment later, cheers erupted from people's mouths.

“All the monsters have disappeared!”

Hearing that strong shout, the hunters finally realized the situation.

The fact that today's terrible battle is over. However, the reason why their expressions show a sense of relief and a terrible sense of exhaustion at the same time was because they knew very well that they did nothing here today.

While they were drowning inside an illusion, only one stood out.

*'Sung Suho...'*

The fact that that young hunter fought against the mob boss alone and finally won. Everyone saw it with their own two eyes.

*'Sung Suho Hunter.'*

*'The Woojin Guild.'*

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

When the eyes of the hunters all looked at Suho standing tall in the center, the eyes of the civilians outside naturally had no choice but to turn in that direction. Beru, who was very satisfied with those awe-filled gazes, turned to Suho.

[Little lord, at least wave your hand. Everyone is looking up to the little lord.]

"...This is fine." Suho looked a little lost in thought. He couldn't feel good when he saw his father disappearing again in front of my eyes after not seeing him for so long.

However, he didn't intend to stay in this mood forever.

Doesn't he still have more work he needs to do?

"Esil!" Esil, who had not been seen for a while after Suho's call, waved her hand from somewhere on the shore.

"Suho! I found it!" What everyone forgot about due to the sudden appearance of the mob boss. The Woojin Guild led by Suho, however, still did not forget the purpose of coming here. "I found the gate!"

...!

At Esil's cry, everyone looked at him with startled expressions.

'Ah!'

'Come to think of it!'

'We were looking for the gate!'

They somehow caught the boss mob, but the Suho's guild was a gate search group from the beginning. And while everyone is dealing with that boss mob, Esil was the only one who managed to find a gate that was hidden somewhere on this beach far away.

"Good job." It was only then that Suho grinned when he saw Esil waving from afar and then turned his gaze to find the other guild member besides Esil.

"Are you all right!"

"Healers this way!"

"Medical staff! Medical staff!"

Already in the vicinity, healers and medical staff from the Hunter Association rushed in unison and were treating the injured. In particular, Lim Tae-Gyu, an S-class hunter, suffered visibly severe burns. However, Lim Tae-Gyu himself did not care about such burns.

Instead...

"Please treat my son first rather than me."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“This is the son of Hunter Lim Tae-Gyu?!”

The medical staff looked surprised at Lim Tae-Gyu's words. At their words, Lim Tae-Gyu responded by patting the back of Lim Do-Gyun, who was lying exhausted next to him, with warm eyes.

“...Yes. He is my pride and joy.”

It was fortunate indeed. Because he was able to rescue his son from such a terrible disaster. But today was different from 'then'.

*-jAaaaaaah!*

The son did not look at his father with a fearful expression as he did back then. And he no longer ran away from himself.

“Hyung, are you okay?”

“No. It's not okay.” Lim Do-Gyun stood up holding Suho's hand with an expression that he was just glad he was alive. At the same time, he held out his other hand to his father, Lim Tae-Gyu, and said,

“What about you dad? Are you alright?”

“...This kid.” Who cares about who? Lim Tae-Gyu laughed at his son's worry while looking at his burns and stood up holding his hand.

\* \* \*

The inside of the gate that Esil found was already empty. Suho wondered if Javier had eaten all the life. Still, the amount of dungeon minerals present in it was significant and the ownership of all the minerals went back to Woojin Guild led by Suho. Of course, these details did not exist in the contract, but it was because Lim Tae-Gyu gave up all the rights he was supposed to receive to Su-ho. However, there was one problem.

Time.

When all monsters disappeared and even the boss mob died, the time a gate was maintained was extremely short. To mine ore in such a short time, an enormous number of miners had to be put in at once.

But that didn't matter to Woojin's guild.

“Arise.”

Numerous shadow miners raised their bodies all at once from inside the shadow of Suho. They rushed into the dungeon with pickaxes and shovels and started mining ore at breakneck speed.



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"Unbelievable..." Lim Tae-Gyu, who witnessed the wonderful appearance, opened his mouth wide. He knew that Sung Suho was a summoner, but he never imagined that he could summon this amount at once. Suho approached him and tried to negotiate in earnest.

"Are there any dungeons left in the guild you bought? The riskier the better."

"...Now I know why Do-Gyun has learned to run so fast."

"I think there must be a misunderstanding."

A real misunderstanding.

-----

T/N:

1: Apparently there are two kinds of demons out there, those whose souls are contaminated with mana and those that can be extracted like Harmakan. This has to do with the fact that there are two Demon(?) Monarchs, One is Baran Monarch of white flames and king of Demons, the other is Yogumunt, Monarch of transfiguration and King of *Demonic Specters*, which is what Jin-Woo is referring to here. Both are actually different kinds of species in Korean. For demons it's 악마 which is the demons inspired from Christianity, and for demonic specters it's 망령들의양 which are more identified as ghouls, ghosts, wraiths, ect.

# 173

Although there was a minor misunderstanding, Suho started negotiations with Lim Tae-Gyu in earnest. Initially, Suho's plan was to buy back the dungeon attack rights at a low price, which the Reaper Guild, suffering from manpower shortage, could not approve. However, there was a big variable here, and it was that the financial difficulties of the Reaper Guild had become much worse than Suho expected. Lim Tae-Gyu had already sold all of the dungeon raiding rights he had in the guild.

“...So you really don't have them?”

“Yes.”

“Not even a single one?”

“That's the way it is.” Lim Tae-Gyu explained the situation with a shy expression. “Our guild decided to act as a small mercenary for a while. Most of the money from the raiding rights was added to the cost of the equipment”

“...” It was Suho who flinched slightly at this part. The A-class weapon Lim Tae-Gyu lent to Suho before going to the Glacier Dungeon: The 'Grim Reaper's Bow' was carried away by the ice elf Sirka who left with his mother, so there was no way to return it to him. Fortunately, Lim Tae-Gyu had no intention of asking for the bow to be returned. The reason why he lent the bow to Suho in the first place was because his son, Lim Do-Gyun, belonged to the Woojin Guild he led, so he gave it to him in the hope that his son would be safe even a little bit. Until Lim Do-Gyun left the Woojin Guild, he was willing to continue lending.

“Yes. It just went well. Since you are now the guild leader, I will take this opportunity to briefly explain the operation of the guild. Do-Gyun, you are also the Vice-guildmaster, so listen carefully.”

Lim Tae-Gyu gave Suho and Lim Do-Gyun realistic advice. The point was, after all, 'money'.

“For a guild to monopolize an entire dungeon in the first place requires more investment than you think. Needless to say, the place where the most money goes is the right into the raiding rights for a dungeon.” In other words, in order to win the fierce bidding competition between guilds, the guild's financial power is required. The more so-called 'bullets', the better. “But buying the raiding rights to attack isn't the end. Shouldn't you be recovering the investment you made inside that dungeon? It also takes a lot of money to do that.”

“You mean labor cost?”

“Yes. Seeing that you understand so quickly, you must have taken off your rookie shirt.” Lim Tae-Gyu nodded and continued to explain. Personal expenses, in other words: Labor costs required when calling in external services such as mining and collection teams was also expensive. Of course, most of those people were E or D, so the ransom was not high. However there were not just one or two of them and the biggest problem was...

“For those people, one has to give them the daily wages they worked for that day in their hands when they leave work. However, if the guild's reserves are tight due to buying raiding permits to capture the dungeon, it means that they cannot even think of calling in for manual labor right away.”

No matter how great a hunter was, money didn't come as soon as he entered the dungeon. It was a system in which the money was deposited into the bank account only when the corpses of demons, essence stones, and mana crystals obtained in the dungeon were sold. However, even if they dug up minerals in the dungeon, they couldn't sell them right away. It took at least two or more days.

"From here on, it's a real business area, so it's a completely separate area from monster hunting." Lim Tae-Gyu's explanation was all right. But in fact, from Suho's point of view, there was no need to worry about this. It was decided that Yoo Jin-Ho, Suho's uncle, would take care of such chores in the future.

"However," There was a reason why Lim Tae-Gyu bothered to explain these things to Suho. "It seems that your guild doesn't need to call for a service like other guilds do." His gaze turned to the shadow soldiers of Suho, who were frantically picking axes with a very crestfallen expression.

**¡Bang bang bang bang!**

**¡Bang bang bang bang bang!**

[Group 2! I see your hands! If the quantity is less than 1 trillion, I will make you all pay!]

[Kieeek! How dare an eternal second-in-command give commands!]

[Keough! That bastard's second-in-command!?!]

As Quay and Beru were conducting a mining competition by commanding the shadow miners, Lim Tae-Gyu could not hide his dejected expression at that fierce and tremendous sight.

“...I was well aware of the fact that you were a summoner, but I never thought it would be like this.”

Some people were going to have bad luck during their lives, and yet, seeing just how lucky Suho was, meanwhile his own guild was slowly recovering, he couldn't help but feel disheartened. He also felt complicated about his jealousy because it was a guild where his son is the vice-guildmaster (?).

He would have certainly vomited blood on the spot if he found out that Quay, who was picking up the pickaxe more excitedly than anyone else, was the one who had ruined his guild in the first place. Sometimes, ignorance really was a bliss.

*‘Hmmm. Has Suho been able to summon so many summoned magic beasts before?’*

I couldn't help but ask this question.

*'Did you hide your power at that time? There doesn't seem to be a reason for that.'*

Unexpectedly, Lim Tae-Gyu did not realize Suho is a special hunter who gradually grows through leveling up. For him, that kind of thing was far out of the realm of imagination in the first place.

Suho nodded and asked Lim Tae-Gyu. "Anyways, you're saying that you really don't have any permits to clear the dungeon. Then can I ask you one more favor?"

"What favor?"

"Currently, Woojin's guild has 1 billion won. Now that I'm in Busan, can I buy the Knights Guild's dungeon permits with this money?"

"You want me to mediate with them? That won't be difficult." It was Lim Tae-Gyu who nodded coldly at those words.

"That's what you want me to do, no?"

His prediction was correct. There were quite a few dungeons that were difficult to clear in Busan these days. Because of that, the Knights Guild was also experiencing a manpower shortage to the extent that it started hiring several mercenaries, including the Reaper Guild. As a result, it would be possible to transfer the right to conquer dungeons at a fairly low price.

"But will you be okay?"

"What?"

"Because of this incident, all reporters in Busan are now flocking to Haeundae to interview you. Besides, even now in Busan..."

"Ah, if it's that then it's fine." Suho shrugged as if the subject didn't matter.

\* \* \*

"Thank you very much!"

*'...um?'*

Park Jong-Soo, the guildmaster of the Knights Guild, was holding Lim Do-Gyun's hands and shaking them with a broad smile.

"Thanks to Woojin Guild's hard work, this situation was resolved smoothly!"

**¡Wooooo!**

The cheers poured intensively towards him.

*'... Uhm?'*

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“Because of this, I would like to give a plaque of appreciation on behalf of Busan City to Hunter Lim Do-Gyun, Vice-guildmaster of Woojin Guild, who resolved this situation.”

“...?”

It was Lim Do-Gyun who was handing over the plaque of appreciation from the mayor of Busan.

**Click click click click!**

Camera flashes from all directions dazzled him. Lim Do-Gyun thought.

*'Who am I?'*

If you ask who he was, he was the Vice-guildmaster of the Woojin Guild.

*"Where am I?"*

In Busan City Hall, the center of the event where appreciation plaques are awarded. It was the center of all spotlights. Haeundae, off the coast of Busan, was one of the core areas of Busan. If this place collapsed, Busan could suffer an economic blow in many ways. However, Woojin Guild, who solved the dangerous situation, said that he would 'specially' stay and attack more dungeons in Busan, and eventually the mayor of Busan appeared with a plaque of appreciation.

Of course, these appreciation plaques were useless items that didn't even sell for money and didn't sell in second-hand markets. However it had its own value. Now, Woojin Guild is a trustworthy guild directly certified by the mayor of Busan, so it can proudly operate in Busan.

“By the way, Guildmaster Sung Suho seems to be very busy. Heh heh heh.”

“Yes. Our boss has just entered the dungeon...”

When the mayor of Busan asked why the guildmaster did not attend such an auspicious occasion, Lim Do-Gyun swallowed his crying feeling and tried his best to answer. He was in a dungeon, correct. Although it was a shadow dungeon. Sung Suho, who was supposed to be here, left all the troublesome work to Lim Do-Gyun and suddenly went on a daily quest.

“Heh heh heh. Well, that's fine. Hunters really are quite busy people, eh? Then, Vice-guildmaster Lim Do-Gyun, since the appreciation plaque awarding ceremony is over, please move to our office. I have prepared a contract related to the dungeon raid.”

“...Ah, yes.”

“I heard that Vice-guildmaster Lim Do-Gyun was the son of Hunter Lim Tae-Gyu, no? You resemble your father quite a lot, you must be well known.” Lim Do-Gyun, suddenly surrounded by high-ranking people, followed the Guildmaster with a corpse-like face.

Meanwhile, Suho was also feeling exasperated, in a completely different sense from Lim Do-Gyun, he was instead facing a huge crisis.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

\* \* \*

"What..."

Suho, who entered the Shadow Dungeon for a daily quest, couldn't help but be frightened.

Ammut, the teacher of rigid body technique...

[Khehehe. Can you feel the difference in power?]

For some reason, Ammut was twice as big as usual! The pyramid was also bigger too! And also, an unusual black beam of light was rising from the top of the pyramid. Although, the biggest problem was that Ammut didn't just grow in size.

**Koo koo koo!**

[Now then, let's start training.]

"Wait, wait. It seems that the atmosphere has changed a lot from usual?"

[Ah, that's nothing to worry about. I already got permission from your dad.]

*'What the hell!'*

A chill crossed his spine.

The state of the gravitational field that weighed down the whole body was also very unusual!

At that time, Beru was nodding his head with a smile that couldn't be more pleased from a distance away.

[The librarian is one of the hardships of being young. As hard as it is, the reward is definitely...]

*'The reward is the damn same!'*

Suho hated it and started doing push-ups.

**Crack!**

"Stop stop!!!"

Both arms were broken at once.

**Whiririk!**

Then, a bandage came flying and wrapped around the arm and today's rigid body training began in earnest.

"Ouch!"

[Ha ha ha ha ha!]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

now the training, no, torture had now become twice as harder than usual.

[The level of 'Skill: Tenacity' has risen!]

[Physical defense +140% → +160%]

Even when he engaged in hand-to-hand combat with Javier, his toughness skill had been quiet at the time, but now it rose at once.

After a while, the reward arrived in front of Suho, whose limbs were in tatters and were strewn about like rags on the floor.

[The following rewards are prepared.]

[Reward 1: Status Recovery]

[Reward 2: Ability Points +5]

[Reward 3: 2 random boxes]

“...Did the rewards go up?”

The daily quest rewards, which originally gave +3 stat points, was changed to +5.

There were also two random boxes as a reward.

But since he didn't understand the reason for them, Suho discarded them.

# 174

After that, the Knights Guild received 1 billion from the Woojin Guild and handed over the right to raid three intermediate dungeons. These three dungeons had appeared in the Yeongnam region including Busan. The fact that they only received 1 billion won and handed it over was proof of how much they were grateful to Suho for this incident. Even the knights guild members gave consideration that they did not ask for.

“The Woojin guild doesn’t have a healer, right? While you are active in Busan, we will support you with one of the most skilled healers in our Knights Guild.”

“A healer? No, you don't even have to...”

Lim Do-Gyun, who was stuck in the contract handed over by Suho, initially tried to refuse the consideration of Park Jong-Soo, Guildmaster of the Knights. However, Lim Tae-Gyu, who helped with the contract process, accepted the offer with a snap.

“A healer whose skill is the best among your guild? Could it be you are talking about Hunter Lee Joo-Hee?”

“Yes, that's right.”

“Hoo.”

Lim Tae-Gyu looked quite surprised. Then he whispered right into Lim Do-Gyun's ear.

“Take it unconditionally. Hunter Lee Joo-Hee can be very helpful, in many ways.”

“Really? In many ways...” Lim Do-Gyun was puzzled. Lim Tae-Gyu didn't even listen to his son's answer, but went ahead and grabbed Guildmaster Park Jong-Soo's hand and grinned. “Thank you for your consideration. As expected, the reputation of the Knights Guild is great, and they pay attention to even the smallest details.”

“Oh, no. This is also because Hunter Lee Joo-Hee volunteered for it.”

“Ah, as expected of headhunter Lee Joo-Hee.”

“.....?”

Lim Do-gyun was still confused because he did not know how the situation was going. *‘Anyway, does that mean that the knights will cut the price of dungeons and support healers?’*

It was proof that Haeundae, which Suho protected, was of great value in Busan.

From that point on, the Woojin Guild, led by Suho, started full-scale activities in Busan.

However, unlike the Knights Guild, not all hunters in Busan were friendly to the Woojin Guild.



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

*'Hey, did you hear? The Knights Guild handed over three intermediate dungeons to the Woojin Guild? That's cheap!'*

*'If that's the case, why did they compete with us for the fierce bidding?'*

*'No matter how active they are at Haeundae, they shouldn't be allowed to do this!'*

*'If there was not enough manpower from the beginning to conquer it, they should have preempted the dungeon instead. Isn't it right to give our guild a chance first?'*

*'If the Haeundae Knights Guild had done their job properly in the first place, there wouldn't have been a need to call in mercenaries from outside, no?'*

*'In the end the Knights Guild is only big in name but not in performance.'*

Dissatisfaction began to emerge from the small and medium-sized guilds in Busan, which were usually suppressed by the Knights Guild, the largest guild in Busan.

Although their claims were like those of a persistent bird, their complaints weren't entirely unfounded either.

During the Haeundae incident that was solved by Woojin Guild, there were only a few people that had seen this serious situation play out. Meanwhile, hunters from other guilds were busy attacking other dungeons at that time.

That's why most of them were able to come across the incident only belatedly through the news. A disaster seen through the screen is inevitably less effective than seeing it right in front of you. But now, when the news came out that they even went to the mayor of Busan to give them a plaque of appreciation, they couldn't hold back their anger.

*'No, fuck. What the hell is the Woojin Guild doing?'*

*'I heard it's a new guild with only 3 members!'*

*'What the— The guild leader is a C-class hunter and the deputy guild leader is an E-class hunter? This is not even remotely funny.'*

*'So what did they do?'*

*'At the end of the video, a foreigner named Esil found the location of the gate?'*

*'It is said that a guy named Sung Suho defeated the boss mob, but there was nothing recorded on the video about how he defeated it?'*

...Of course, since most of the full-fledged battles took place inside Harmakan's instance dungeon, the embers of their dissatisfaction began to burn.

And in the end.

"Hold it!" There were people who stood in front of Woojin's guild. They had arrived at the gate to attack the intermediate dungeon that they had given money for.

'¿Hmm?'

Suho looked at them with a puzzled expression. They were faces he didn't know.

"Suho. No, guild leader." Lim Do-Gyun, who was next to him, quickly whispered into Suho's ear. "They are famous hunters in Busan. They are called..."

"What are you doing?" Suho listened to Lim Do-gyun's explanation and asked them.

Then, a large hunter in the middle of them stepped forward to Suho with a stern expression, revealing his teeth.

"Hey..."

"Wait a minute! Noh Joon-Gi Hunter, you can't do this here! This dungeon belongs to the Woojin Guild!"

The Hunter Association employees of the Busan branch, which manages the gate, were greatly embarrassed and blocked hunters who suddenly entered the scene. Then, the huge hunter, Noh Joon-Gi, glared at the association staff who were restraining him with a disapproving expression.

"I know. Who doesn't know Korean?" His gaze glanced at a nearby sign.

[Gwangalli Gate]

※No entry except for Woojin Guild

**Tch!**

Then, grinding his teeth, he again raised his fierce momentum toward the association staff. "Is it okay for the Association to do this?"

"Yes? Why wouldn't it be?..."

"Is it okay for the association to break the law set by the association first?" Noh Jun-gi looked at each of the hunters in Woojin's guild and said, Guild leaders Sung Suho, Lim Do-Gyun, and Esil.

"I'm really dumbfounded. Only 3 people? Since when was it acceptable to clear a mid-level dungeon with just this amount of members?"

"You're right. Isn't the raid starting with at least 10 people?"

"This is obviously illegal."

The other hunters brought by Noh Joon-Gi raised their voices as if they had waited and began to agree with his words.

*'So he came with those intentions.'*

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Seeing this, Suho laughed.

The hunters' sit-in was on a different level from what ordinary people did. When the hunters, led by No Joon-Gi, expressed their dissatisfaction by actually raising their magic power, even the air around the area was shaking ominously.

"Now, calm down for a moment..." The problem was that the association employees who had to deal with that energy were office workers, so they were non-awakened. They were oppressed by the energy emitted by the hunters, including Noh Jun-ki, to the point where they could not breathe properly. It was then.

"I'm sorry! I'm a little late!"

The moment Lee Joo-Hee, a B-class healer supported by the Knights Guild, arrives on the scene.

"...Huh?" In an instant, the heavy air became lighter, and the hunters' energy disappeared like a lie.

"Hunter Lee Joo-Hee?"

"What is Lee Joo-Hee doing here?"

They recognized Lee Joo-Hee and their eyes widened. "Ah! Long time no see. I'm so glad you all look healthy."

When Lee Joo-Hee also recognized the hunters and nodded, they waved their hands, not knowing what to do.

"It's Lee Joo-Hee hunter-nim! We have to say hello!"

"Hello Lee Joo-Hee hunter-nim, have you been well?"

"I heard that you joined the Knights Guild. So what are you doing here?"

"Ah, I heard that there are no healers in the Woojin guild, so I came to support you for the time being."

".....!"

'¿Hmm?'

A strangeness appeared in Suho's eyes. With the sudden appearance of Lee Joo-Hee, the atmosphere suddenly shifted.

"Guildmaster Sung Suho, I'm sorry for being late." Lee Joo-Hee approached Suho and apologized politely once again.

"No, it's fine. You're only a few minutes late."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“No, in fact, there is one more thing I have to apologize for. I found the scene of a traffic accident on my way, so I spent a little bit of my magic healing the emergency patients.”

Lee Joo-Hee who sincerely apologized again. It was a very big mistake for a healer to waste magic before clearing a dungeon. However, if the reason was to save emergency patients, no one who knew Lee Joo-Hee's character could denounce the mistake.

“Ah, you're still the same.”

“As expected of Lee Joo-Hee...”

“Mhm.”

Especially those former rookie hunters who once had days with no money or connections. Such an act held a strong significance for the hunters in Busan who had the experience of receiving her free healing at least once. Until relatively recently, Lee Joo-Hee had been working as a freelance healer, treating injured hunters free of charge. It was not for nothing that she was nicknamed the 'Saint of Busan'.

“Mhm.”

“Hmm.”

The hunters, who had been attacking vigorously, suddenly hesitated in front of Lee Joo-Hee with embarrassed expressions.

*'Ah, so that's why he said she would be helpful in many ways.'*

As the atmosphere returned to normal, Lim Do-Gyun was able to understand what Lim Tae-Gyu said.

“... But Still!!!” Noh Joon-Gi closed his eyes and opened his mouth again. The other hunters also tried to avoid Lee Joo-Hee's eyes and gained momentum again. “What's Illegal is illegal!”

“The minimum number of hunters to enter a dungeon is a rule set by the association!”

The limit on the number of people is the minimum safety device for hunters. It was a rule established by the association to prevent hunters from entering the dungeon blindly and losing their lives.

“So how dare you all sell a dangerous dungeon to such a weak guild!”

“Oh, don't worry about that.”

“...Excuse me?”

Lee Joo-Hee, who finally noticed the situation, calmed their complaints with a smile.

“It is true that there is a minimum number of people, but when making the rules, Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the association, made special exceptions.”

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“... And what are they?”

Lee Joo-Hee suddenly had thought of this as she saw the frowning hunters. After the cataclysm, the president of the association, Woo Jin-Chul, a great person who has only taken special steps every time, had probably anticipated that something like this would have happened and planned something out beforehand.

“The number of people in the raid can also include the number of summons they have.” As soon as Lee Joo-Hee's explanation was finished, Suho opened his mouth as if he had been waiting to say it.

“Arise.”

.....!

Surprise unfolded in the eyes of all Hunters. With Suho at the center, countless summoned beasts raised their bodies all at once! The powerful energy emitted by the shadow soldiers, who shivered in black steam all over their bodies, burst out in all directions. Noh Joon-Gi, who was at the front, was startled by the fierce momentum and nearly backed away.

Just then, the little ant Beru, thrustured himself to the face of Noh Joon-Gi and roared in the most ferocious force.

[Kee Ee Ee Ekk!!!]

“Ahhhhh!!”

**Crash!**

Noh Joon-Gi fell and hit his butt.

“Now then,” Suho, turned away from those who stood there in shock. He smiled faintly as he glared at the ominous blue gate in front of him. “Shall we start?”

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

How long did it take for Woojin's guild to clear all the intermediate dungeons transferred to the Knights' guild? Only 3 days, including the time it took to mine it.

“...This is nonsense!”

All the hunters in Busan, including Noh Joon-Gi, were astonished at that phenomenal speed.

\* \* \*

Around the same time in the US.

“Hmm. I think I should tell Sung Suho about this.”

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

The Guildmaster of the Scavenger Guild, Thomas Andre, America's strongest S-rank hunter, took out his cell phone leisurely.

-Thomas?

"Oh good, you picked up." Thomas Andre smiled as he heard the voice of Sung Suho over the cell phone.

"You've become quite famous in Korea these days, right? Both of us seem to be busy now, so I'll go straight to the point." A soft light was emanating from the body of Thomas Andre, who was talking on the phone.

"First of all, your mother said she found something in the tombs of the light dragons, so she asked me to pass it on to you instead. Coincidentally, Laura said she had just obtained a higher-level magic crystal, so I sent both things with her, she should arrive soon."

Cha Hae-In, who decided to stay at the Tomb of the Dragons a little longer, decided to deliver the goods through the Scavenger guild working in Ireland.

"Oh, and..." Thomas Andre glanced at the other hand that was not holding the cell phone, holding the collar of a corpse that he held before he continued, "I just killed an Apostle of the Itarim."

.....!

The land where Thomas Andre is standing now has a huge crater formed as if a meteorite had fallen.

**Woosh...**

Soon, the body he was carrying was broken into pieces and scattered like ashes.

**Shaaaaa**

The ashes turned into light powder and permeated Thomas Andre's body.

- Who was it?

"It's as you guessed."

Absorbing that power, Thomas Andre looked back at the face of the Hunter he had killed.

"Christopher Reed."

He was a man who was once an American national level hunter in his previous life.

# 175

A long time ago, in a world before the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo turned back the earth's time, there were hunters who received the title of 'strongest', which was given to only five people in the world.

'National Level Hunter' The title was literally a symbol of absolute power, that one person's power equals one country. It was an honorable title given only to hunters who had tremendous power that could not be dared to be called 'S-rank'.

However, the reason why those five people were given such an honorable title was never glorious. Humanity's worst catastrophe. The first S-rank gate. A boss-class monster had jumped out of there. 'Dragon Kamish' was the worst calamity in history. A monster with tremendous power enough to blow up the entire western United States as soon as the dungeon break occurred. At the time, the United States called in the world's strongest hunters with huge rewards, and managed to hunt Kamish.

As a result, only five survived to the end. A single monster had killed all of the world's top hunters. Perhaps, without their sacrifice, the United States would have been erased from the world map. Therefore, the United States promised to treat the five who saved their own destiny as 'one nation', not as one person. This is said to be the origin of the term 'National Level Hunter'.

However, there was one curious fact here: National Level Hunters had something in common. To be more precise, except for the hunter who served as the healer in the Kamish Raid, all four had one skill in common.

Straight up telekinesis. It was a skill that applied force to an object without touching it. There were many strong people before and after the Kamish Raid, but there were only four people in history who had the same ability. So, the Hunter Management Bureau at the time, the only one who knew what they had in common, considered this 'psychopower' as a condition for becoming a hunter of National Level status.

Now, many years have passed since then. Suho knew exactly the true identity of their 'telekinesis'.

[Skill: Ruler's Touch]

That power was the result of the 'Rulers' dwelling in their bodies, which were ordinary S-rank hunters. In other words, the four hunters had borrowed the power of the Rulers at the time and became strong to achieve the power of a National Level Hunter. Those who had the capacity to accept the rulers were the ones most likely to be taken over by the Apostles of Itarim again.

Just as they had done to Thomas Andre in the Glacier Dungeon.

\* \* \*

“Thomas Andre, I arrest you for the murder of Christopher Reed.”

While Thomas Andre was on the phone with Suho, before he knew it, numerous fully armed hunters were approaching and surrounding him. United States Hunter Bureau. The agency with the most powerful authority in the United States has been dispatched to prevent Thomas Andre's rampage. But even with this numerical advantage, it was not the beleaguered Thomas Andre who was nervous.

“Ah, wait a minute. As you can see, I'm on an important call right now.” Thomas Andre sent a light gesture to the hunters who surrounded him. Continuing the phone call with Suho calmly

“.....”

### ***Gulp.***

On the other hand, the hunters of the Hunter Bureau who completely surrounded him were determined. The person they were about to arrest was none other than Thomas Andre. But the problem was that the person killed by him was also Christopher Reed, one of America's leading S-rank hunters.

*'Why would someone like Thomas Andre suddenly do something like this?'*

*'There's nothing to be gained by killing an S-class hunter.'*

*'He can earn an astronomical amount of money if he enters the dungeon with all his strength. So why?'*

From the perspective of the Hunter Management Bureau, which had no information about the Itarim, it was inevitable to be confused by Thomas Andre's sudden action. Up until now, it wasn't that there hadn't been any fights between S-rank hunters, but it was an unprecedented event that one of them fought to the death like this. That was because a system called the Hunter Point Ranking was created, and the need for hunters to compete meaninglessly no longer existed.

How many more dangerous monsters have you hunted? How many more dungeons were cleared? Because the hunter ranking, which converts these various raids into points, is the only indicator recognized worldwide, hunters began to focus more on conquering dungeons, rather than focusing on fights that give less money.

*'But why?'*

No matter how much they thought about it, he couldn't figure out why Thomas Andre suddenly murdered Christopher Reed. It was then.

“Thomas Andre.”

Suddenly, the hunters split left and right, and there was a man who walked through the gap. An old gentleman with neatly combed hair. Surprisingly, unlike the other Hunters, he was unarmed.



“Chief...!”

“Wait! It's Dangerous!”

“Ah, that's fine.” After he stopped his subordinates with a light gesture who were trying to stop his reckless behavior, he walked towards Thomas Andre. Even Thomas Andre had to stop talking for a moment at his appearance.

“Adam White.” Upon recognizing his identity, the corner of Thomas's mouth curled up as if he was interested.

“What is the Director of the Hunter Bureau doing around here?”

“...Thomas Andre. Please kindly respond to the investigation.” The corners of Thomas Andre's mouth went up even more at those words.

“And what if I don't want to?” Thomas Andre grinning and showing his teeth. Despite his provocative remarks, the director of the Hunter Bureau, Adam White, only sighed quietly rather than raising his voice. Suddenly, his gaze swept over the completely devastated land around him.

Originally, this was the place where Christopher Reed lived in a luxurious mansion. But now...

*'It's as if a nuclear bomb has exploded. Is this what happens when two S-rank hunters fight?'*

To say that an S-rank Hunter is a walking weapon of war was by no means an exaggeration. Adam White smiled bitterly and politely asked Thomas Andre again.

“...What is the point of saying no? Should we ask you to cooperate with us more earnestly? . Everyone here is someone's precious child and parent, I also have a wife and children that I need to take care of.”

"Huh." At Adam White's words, Thomas Andre opened his mouth with a steamy expression. “You're still a boring bastard.”

“Even if you say that, I'm usually evaluated as quite an interesting boss.”

“That's just your social life. Even my subordinates laugh when I crack some jokes with them.”

While a meaningless conversation was going on between the two, the hunters surrounding Thomas Andre couldn't even breathe properly. Even if Thomas Andre had a little whim here today, they would never see the sun again tomorrow.

“.....”

“.....”

There was a moment of silence, and the eyes of Thomas Andre and Adam White crossed in the air. For some, it was an instant, but for everyone else, it was a eon of time.

“Fine.”

Thomas Andre smiled at the end and obediently raised both hands as if surrendering. At the same time, the corpse of Christopher Reed that he was holding fell to the floor.

**Woosh...**

Surprisingly, the moment the corpse hit the floor, it crumbled like a burnt-out piece of charcoal and shattered. Everyone who witnessed the scene widened their eyes. Then, at the same time, realizing that they didn't have to fight Thomas Andre, they all sighed in relief.

Thomas Andre spoke to Suho on his phone again.

“Did you hear? Well, that's how the atmosphere turned out. So I think it will be hard to visit the other guys from other countries for the time being.”

*'Other countries?'*

Hearing those words from the side, Adam White's expression hardened. Seeing his surprised expression, Thomas Andre smiled and added another word to Suho. “It's okay with Chris because he's an American at least, but people from other countries have some political problems.”

- Oh, that's true.

Suho also agreed and nodded through his phone. People who were national level hunters in their previous lives were still S-rank hunters after all. To say that someone the size of Thomas Andre would go to another country to deal with them was tantamount to the United States declaring war against that country.

“Then, the business ends here. I will send you more information about Christopher Reed separately.”

-All right. Good job.

**Peep**

The call was disconnected.

“May I ask who you were talking to?”

To Adam White's question that followed, Thomas Andre smirked instead of answering and said, putting his muscular arm around his shoulder.

“Adam, since we haven't seen each other in a while, could you buy me a hamburger on the way home? I used some of my strength so now I'm hungry.”

“...I'll buy you a combo.”

“Nice. As expected of the director, you are such a great guy. While you are buying it, buy the subordinates behind me some too. They don't look so good.”

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"All right."

Adam White smiled bitterly and granted all of Thomas Andre's demands.

\* \* \*

After Thomas Andre was obediently arrested by the Hunter Berau. As he said, his secretary, Laura, came to Korea with gifts for Suho.

"Laura, how is Thomas?"

"You don't have to worry about our boss. He is the type to eat well and live well wherever he goes." To calm Suho's worries, Laura answered as if it was not a big deal.

Anyways, from the point of view of the United States, it was too risky to keep Thomas Andre tied up for a long time. If the income earned by S-rank hunters from dungeons decreased, the corresponding taxes would also decrease. Considering the safety of their own country, the US government would have no choice but to press the Hunter Bureau to release Thomas Andre. The fact that he did not kill civilians, but the fact that he killed a hunter of the same class also played a part in his release. No, rather, as the number of S-rank Hunters decreased by one, Thomas Andre had to fill the void.

"...Besides, our boss had no intention of killing Christopher Reed from the start. Rather, it was a direct visit to present our product, the Detox Potion." A.k.a the Spring Water from the Echo Forest. The detoxification potion obtained from the holy ground of the Ice Elves was so effective that it restored the spirit of Thomas Andre, who was possessed by the Apostle of the Itarim. This was to prevent the same accident by feeding the spring water to other hunters who were at the level of national power in their previous lives. That was the way Suho and Thomas Andre had planned from the beginning.

"By the way, our boss said there was a bit of an accident in the process of delivering the detoxifying potion to Christopher Reed."

"A bit of an accident?" It was Suho who made a dumbfounded expression at those words. He couldn't imagine how 'how little' it had to be to kill an S-rank hunter.

"Ah, since I also brought information related to that, it would be quicker to see it for yourself. From here on out, all that is shown has to be kept a secret." Laura put a USB in Suho's hand. And alongside her, she had the staff bring other items that she originally intended to deliver to Suho.

After a while, two specially made hard bags appeared in front of Suho.

"Is this it?"

"Yes. This is the advanced magic crystal you requested earlier, and this one... is the object that Miss Cha Hae-In found in the Tomb of Dragons."

"....."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Suho was silent for a while in front of the large bags Laura handed him.

[Little Lord, I feel an unusual energy coming from it.]

Beru appeared next to him and was also quite cautious.

***Click.***

Suho first opened the bag from his mother. Of course, he already knew the identity of this content because he had been contacted by Cha Hae-In in advance.

'It's a dragon egg.'

Soon the bag was opened. Inside it was an egg the size of an ostrich egg, as previously informed. However, the problem appeared when the system's message popped up the moment the egg touched Suho's hand.

**T-Ring!**

[Obtained 'Item: Kamish's Egg'.]

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[It's the egg of Kamish!]

Suho made a puzzled expression as he looked at Beru's startled face. "Do you know that name?"

[Of course I know! Kamish is...]

Beru all the sudden began speaking passionately as he told Suho about the red dragon, Kamish.

After hearing the story, Suho nodded. "I see. It's the egg of the dragon that my father met when he was young."

[Yes. Back then, Kamish was one of the prisoners of war. He was captured by the rulers during the fight. It seems that this is the egg Kamish laid before going to war in this timeline.]

Listening to Beru's explanation, Suho felt strange. "It might be."

*'I wonder. Would it be possible for the dragon born from this egg to become the Dragon Emperor's successor?'*

Suho, who was closely examining Kamish's egg, naturally had no choice but to come up with this thought. Looking back at the series of events he had been through, the probability of that happening was very high.

Laura, who was listening to the conversation between Suho and Beru, then conveyed to Suho what Cha Hae-In said while handing over Kamish's eggs. "Cha Hae-In *nim* suggested you put this in the Shadow Dungeon."

Suho nodded. "I think that would be for the best." After Cha Hae-In found this egg in the Tomb of the Dragons, she thought a lot about how to handle it. It would be a waste to break something so valuable, but it's a pity to just leave it in its original place too. Eventually, what she came up with was Suho's Shadow Dungeon. It also seemed that no matter what kind of monster would be born from this egg, it would be safe if it hatched in the Shadow Dungeon. So this was the best idea.

"Thank you for telling me. I will make sure to take care of this egg, just as my mother said." Suho immediately thanked Laura, who then opened the second bag she had brought.

"These are the high-level essence stones <sup>(1)</sup> you asked for last time." At the same time, a different color appeared in Suho and Beru's eyes. Surprisingly, the number of high-level essence stones in the bag was not one but—

"You got three?"

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"Yes. Of course, it wasn't easy. The number of high-grade essence stones on the market is so small, the bidding competition was a bit fierce."

This was the second year of the Cataclysm.

The Hunter industry was still in the early stages of development, so there were plenty of things to develop, which means there was always a thirst for resources due to the lack of it. In particular, the high-level essence stones that hunters retrieved from dungeons are truly rare among rare items. They were frantic to take from each other in the field of science or the hunter industry the second they are released on the market. So, of course, the price wasn't cheap in the least.

"It must have been very expensive, but thank you very much."

"Don't mention it. This is nothing compared to the price of our boss' life."

Laura promised to bring more again if she ever finds a higher level essence stone.

"...And now, this is the real topic I wanted to discuss with you about." Laura slightly turned her gaze with a firm expression and looked at her subordinates who were currently entering the office of the Woojin Guild. As if they had understood in advance, the Scavenger Guild employees left the office.

"From now on, all of what I'm about to say should stay confidential, as it holds some sensitive information that must not be known to the outside world."

"Mhm, my guild members agree to not disclose it."

"All right."

Lim Do-Gyun and Esil were all of Suho's guild members, and they weren't the ones who would go around talking about secrets. Rather, Suho caught Lim Do-Gyun getting scared and secretly trying to follow the Scavenger's staff.

"*Hyung*, I think you should listen to this."

"No, I don't think I should..." Lim Do-Gyun was feeling insecure as the scale of Suho's activities on which he was active these days had gotten out of control. However, there was no way to escape this because Lim Do-Gyun was in charge of most of the work except for the battle.

Meanwhile Esil sat next to Suho with an indifferent face to the subject.

Suho plugged the USB that Laura had first handed over into his laptop and Laura explained the rest by displaying the video files in the data on the screen.

"Please take a look at this video."

"Christopher Reed?"

The face that appeared on the screen was Christopher Reed, an American S rank hunter who had been killed by Thomas Andre.

“This is the material we found during our investigation at the time. Apparently after Christopher Reed awakened as an S rank hunter, he started receiving psychiatric counseling regularly.”

True to Laura's words, in the video, Christopher Reed was having a conversation with a psychiatrist.

-...I don't know why my heart is so empty these days. Maybe the other awakened feel this way too?

He looked quite tired, and the counselor opened his mouth with a look of incomprehension.

-Christopher, the other awaken I've consulted feels the exact opposite of you. Everyone gets drunk with the full power and feels a sense of exaltation.

-But why am I the only one feeling this way?

-Well... You may feel insecure when you hit a huge jackpot that is too much for you to handle. If you gradually adapt to your strength, you may be okay.

-You mean it's because I became an S rank hunter? That I feel like I've won the lottery all the sudden? But sir, these feelings are a little different from that.

Christopher Reed spoke out about his feelings with a serious expression on his face. Laura showed Suho the videos where he had been receiving periodic consultations in order. Most of the conversations that took place in that consultation were similar.

- Sir, I am still anxious. I think I'm too weak.

- Why did you come to think that way? Chris, you are an S-rank Hunter.

-I don't know. Even though I've definitely become the pinnacle of hunters, I feel weaker than before. I want to become stronger.

“ .... ”

While watching the videos, Suho exchanged glances with Laura with a firm expression. Laura nodded and said. "You're correct. The emotions he felt are exactly the same as our boss was feeling not too long ago."

In the meantime, Christopher Reed's counseling videos continued in order in the video. Most of the content was there.

- Sir, I want to become stronger. No, I think I can become stronger. But I still don't know how.

- Sir, I've been thinking about it. Maybe there is a huge potential hidden in me? S rank or higher?

-Sir, I.....

All the sudden, in a certain moment, Christopher Reed's expression while receiving counseling began to change into a confident one.

-Sir, I think I've found a clue to becoming stronger.

-That's good news Chris. But what is that method?

-That... It's a secret, so I can't tell you, but it works! If I use the method 'they' taught me, I can definitely become stronger.

- Who are *they*?

"They?" Suho also had doubts.

**Tik.**

In an instant, all expressions disappeared from Christopher Reed's face at the question the counselor gave him.

**Chills.**

His eyes had become devoid of any life. Christopher Reed, who had always come with a blank and depressed face, was now making a completely different expression. Then, looking straight into the camera lens that was recording all the counseling process so far, he slowly raised the corner of my mouth.

- I don't...think I can answer that. If I were to do that... I'll... Thank you, sir—

**Click.**

Upon stopping the video, Laura elaborated. "...After that counseling, he was never seen again. Instead, he bought a luxurious mansion and began living in pleasure."

It was common for hunters to live spoiling themselves until their heart's content. It was the ordinary behavior of the nouveau riches that have existed in a long history, transcending gender or age. However, Laura, in a way, after intensively investigating Christopher Reed's natural cours, had found something.

"However, many of the people who were invited to visit his mansion have gone missing."

"Heuk! Missing?! Could it be murder?" Lim Do-Gyun asked with a frightened expression. Laura shook her head slightly and replied.

"No, If it was murder, it would just be murder, but after researching it, it looked like there was more to it. A large amount of Stardust was found in Christopher Reed's mansion."

"Stardust? Actual Stardust?"



"Yes, that's right. It's a magic booster that's quite widespread in Korea too." After hearing the unexpected story, Suho's gaze immediately turned to Esil. Originally, Stardust was a magical power booster developed by lower-level demons in the process of imitating a Bloodstone, the exclusive property of demon aristocrats.

Esil nodded with a firm expression. "It seems that there are demons in that country as well." In a way, it was natural. Even at this moment, the demon world was still torn into many pieces, wandering through the dimensional rift. From a global point of view, the fragments of the demon world could not have been connected to only Korea by a dimensional rift. If this was the case, there was a high probability that a Demon Factory also existed in the United States, or to be exact, all over the world.

"A Demon Factory... I know quite a bit about Stardust. Although, rather than Stardust, our boss had a different reason for killing him."

"...?" Laura turned on the next screen. It showed one picture. The interior of Christopher Reed's ultra-luxury mansion, which has now disappeared after being destroyed by Thomas Andre. It was a picture taken by a brave journalist who risked his life to sneak in and take it.

"... According to the reporter, at some point Christopher Reed seems to have fallen into a strange cult."

"A pseudo-religion?" Suho asked with a puzzled expression.

"Yes. The very next day, the reporter suddenly disappeared from the face of the earth without any knowledge of his whereabouts. He's probably dead, but we recently found a note from the reporter."

**Click.**

Laura turned the next page. Immediately, the words he left behind appeared on the screen.

[Outer God] <sup>(2)</sup>

Suddenly, everyone's eyes widened, including Suho.

"The Foreign Religion." <sup>(3)</sup> Laura looked at the word with a heavy expression as she opened her mouth. "They seem to be calling their religion by that name."

-----

1: It took way too stupidly long to find out this was an essence stone and not a runestone.  
Kinda reason for the delay.

2: The name is written in English

3: Could also be translated as The Outer God Religion

# 177

외신. 外神. Outer God.

There are so many different names of gods on earth, but as far as Suho knew, there was no god called by that name. Except one.

"Itarim."

[It seems that the Apostles of Itarim have begun their activities on Earth in earnest.] Beru glared at the screen Laura showed her with narrow eyes.

"According to the investigation, Christopher Reed's mansion appears to have been used as a Foreign Religion's sanctuary."

"Sanctuary? Could it be that there were other Itarim Apostles there as well?"

"I don't think that is the case. It seems that the only Apostle of Itarim our boss dealt with was the one who stole Christopher Reed's body, and the rest were just his followers."

Suddenly, Suho noticed something strange about Laura's words. "You don't think? So you aren't certain?"

"Yes. The others were all caught up in the battle between Boss and Christopher Reid, so it was impossible to determine exactly. Although, strangely enough, each time Christopher Reed killed his supposed followers, the stronger his powers became."

"...It's a similar situation to the Blood-eyed Tyrant (1) demon."

The eyes of Esil, who had been listening with her arms folded at her side, changed. "It looks like our demons are being bred well somewhere. In many ways." Esil Radiru, the only Demon Noble, gnashed her teeth with an expression of utmost indignation.

In the first place, those who make Stardust are demons, but the most important ingredient in Stardust is also demon blood. In short, it was said that the Foreign religionists were thoroughly using demons for their own purposes.

And the purpose is clear...

*'They're probably trying to find a vessel that can accept the Itarim's power and turn it into their hands and feet.'* And the most qualified would be those who were National Level Hunters in their previous lives. Suho looked at Esil and Lim Do-Gyun and said,

"Esil, haven't you heard anything about the Blood-eyed Tyrant from your demons?"

"There wasn't much. Those guys didn't even know that the Blood-eyed Tyrant was an Apostle of the Itarim in the first place. I'll go back and find out once this is over."

"Yes, please do so. And Do-Gyun *hyung*."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"¿Yes?"

"Please look into the dungeons where demonic beasts appear so our guild can attack them. It will be better to start getting rid of all of them in our country."

"Alright."

Suho decided to take this opportunity to wipe out all the Demon Factories in Korea. If they do that, something like an Itarim's Apostle or a Foreign Religion sanctuary is bound to come out for him to eliminate it.

"Laura, do you have any other information about the Foreign Religion?"

"Yes. We are still investigating, but it seems that it is an elusive secret organization. If it was an ordinary pseudo-religion, there would be a lot more believers."

"Then let's change the plan."

"Change it?" Suho recalled a conversation Christopher Reed had with a counselor. If everything he said was true, 'they' approached him first. If so, there was a high possibility that they would approach others first. They might already be hovering nearby, looking for an opportunity. "... If we continue to hover around the hunters and keep an eye on their movements, won't something come out?"

"Of course, it's obvious, but the problem is that our Scavenger Guild is in a state where it's hard to interfere with countries other than the United States." As Thomas Andre told Suho directly, for the time being, the Scavenger was in a situation where it had to take care of itself. However Suho had no intention of letting go.

"I have another way."

"Are you saying you want to go there yourself?"

"No. I have someone to send instead." Suho replied with a smirk.

\* \* \*

"Suho! Thanks for inviting me! What a kind gift!"

"...How did you get here so fast?"

"I ran at full speed of course! Because Suho is my friend!" Asura Guild's A-rank (2) hunter Rio Singh. As soon as he received the call from Suho, he ran to Woojin Guild's office in an instant with gifts wrapped in a roundabout way on both hands.

Upon seeing Laura, Rio Singh greeted her before talking about his current situation. "I'm in charge of buying weapons from a blacksmith in Korea and sending them to the guild these days!" Although Rio Singh was demoted back to Korea and even failed to recruit Suho, he did not give up and took a new opportunity himself. "Korean weapons are of great quality! They say that the Korean Hunter Association is supporting it, which is really great!"

Rio Singh's Korean had also gotten better. "By the way, what is the purpose of calling me?"

Rio Singh didn't think Suho would call him for no reason. In addition, since Laura of the Scavenger Guild was also here, he was able to notice the purpose with his instinctive business sense. "Is it about the Spring Water of the Echo Forest or the purifying potion?"

"That is somewhat correct."

"Rio Singh, we want to sell the purifying potions to the Asura Guild."

Laura stepped up and formally proposed a business to Rio Singh. After looking through the contract, Rio Singh nodded brightly.

"This is certainly a good offer, but what are these requirements? Does the Guildmaster have to taste it?"

"Yes. In order to promote the product, that is. Since our detoxification potion has not been advertised yet, just the fact that the head of the Asura Guild has personally drunk it will have a pretty big marketing effect."

"Surely so." At Laura's explanation, Rio Singh's eyes twinkled and nodded. He had already been to the Glacier Dungeon together, so he knew very well about the efficacy of the spring water in the Echo Forest.

"This is a huge undertaking! I can definitely get a promotion this time!"

"...You don't even hide your true feelings anymore."

"Ha ha ha." Rio Singh laughed bitterly before contacting the Asura Guildmaster, and succeeded in getting a definite answer to his requirements. Right away he signed all the contracts Suho and Laura offered.

"Since this contract is very important, I have to go to the Asura Guild myself."

"Rio Singh, in the meantime, I want you to do something for me."

"What is your request? You entrusted such a big business to me, any request you ask I will do my best to meet it."

As Rio Singh smiled back, Suho spoke with a serious expression "Watch out for your Guildmaster."

"Our Guildmaster? Why?" Hearing the strange words, Rio Singh put on a bewildered expression, however Suho's eyes were too serious to simply dismiss it as a joke.

Suho recalled the information he had heard from Beru. There had been a total of five people who were National Level Hunters in their previous lives. Among them, excluding one healer, the names of the four people who used the power of the ruler were:

1. American hunter Thomas Andre
2. American hunter Christopher Reed

3. Chinese hunter Liu Zhigang
4. Indian hunter Siddharth Bachchan

The previous two had already been resolved, and only the other two needed to be confirmed. And the first person Suho paid attention to was none other than the fourth: Siddharth Bachchan of India. He was none other than the Guildmaster of the 'Asura Guild'.

"An unknown organization called the Foreign Religion may have approached your Guildmaster, Siddharth Bachchan."

"The Foreign Religion? What is that?"

"You remember Thomas Andre in the Glacier Dungeon, right?"

Since they had been through that situation together, there was no need for further explanation. Recalling the image of Thomas Andre, who had transformed into that huge ice dragon and ran amok, Rio Singh put on a puzzled expression.

"Could it be that my Guildmaster is like that too?"

"Nothing is certain yet, so, could you take a look at him when you go back to the guild?"

"I will. Even so, I believe our Guildmaster wouldn't fall for such things."

Rio Singh took a full load of purifying potions to feed Siddharth Bachchan while he argued. In the meantime, Suho's gaze turned to his shadow. *'Kira, follow him.'*

### **Squeak!**

All of a sudden, Suho's shadow grew longer, and Kira, the shadow assassin, hid in Rio Singh's shadow. Seeing this, Suho's eyes lit up. It was an opportunity to use the new skills acquired after beating the quest his father gave him this time.

\* \* \*

[What the-? How did you find a dragon egg?!]

When Suho entered the Shadow Dungeon with 'Kamish's Egg', the most surprised out of all of them was Queen Bee Arsha.

"Huh? My mother sent it to me saying she found it in the Tomb of the Dragons."

[Oh my god. Is it really...]

Arsha felt dizzy when she saw the egg in Suho's hand. It was too small to be a dragon egg, but the dragon's energy gently flowing from it was real. That energy continued to stimulate Arsha's survival instinct. Arsha asked while looking at Kamish's eggs with an uneasy expression.

[This...Why did you bring something so dangerous here?]

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"Because it's going to be dangerous anywhere else, duh. Besides, isn't it quite safe here?" Suho shrugged and replied. "Like my mother said, I think it's better for it to hatch here than in the Tombs of the Dragons or on Earth. Because no matter what happens here..."

[Kreuk?]

As he said that, Suho's gaze slightly turned to the side. The gigantic crocodile monster there, Ammut, showed his teeth with the most ferocious grin.

[It means I can chew it?]

"Mhm. This is certainly the best place." Suho nodded in satisfaction. "But don't eat it just yet. Perhaps this egg could be the last remaining descendant of the dragons."

Beru nodded, agreeing with Suho's words.

[That is highly probable. See, back in the war against the monarchs, the Dragon Emperor had led all the dragons under his command as he went to war.]

Beru frowned as he recalled that terrible war. Dragon Emperor' Antares, Emperor of Dragons and Monarch of Destruction, was the only monarch who overpowered the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo. He was the strongest dragon in name, and the dragons he led were also formed from invincible legions with enormous power and magic for each individual. The Dragon Emperor was a true embodiment of chaos, willing to even destroy himself for the sake of a raging war filled with blood, screams, madness, and destruction.

That's why Sung Jin-Woo pushed the dragon army even more thoroughly. The more he looked back, the more amazing the power of the Dragon Emperor was. At the time, the shadow army led by Sung Jin-Woo had absorbed all other monarchs' troops. Nevertheless, the Dragon Emperor fought a fierce battle with Sung Jin-Woo until the very last moment against the enormous army. Of course, it was Sung Jin-Woo who eventually won in the end, but it was a fact that we had to admit that the Dragon Emperor's army was truly the strongest when it was only a single race.

[... Although it is a bit unsettling for a descendant of the Dragon Emperor to be born anew.]

"Well, if you raise them as 'pets' from a young age, there will be no problem. Right?"

**Sniff sniff sniff sniff.**

Saying that, Suho looked at the gray wolf that had been clinging to him from earlier. Gray, the wolf tamed by the pet system. Unlike Arsha, this guy was busy sniffing Kamish eggs with his twinkling eyes...

**Woof woof woof!**

While also licking his teeth as if wanting to taste it. The tail was wagging excitedly again, however it doesn't seem like he really wants to eat it, rather his expression looks like he's found a fun.. toy?

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[Just in case, I'll make a nest here. But just this once!]

Arsha ordered her worker bees to build a nest in the corner of Ammut's pyramid to place Kamish's egg. More or less that nest started to look like a prison for the egg in order to confine the monster that will eventually hatch into this world.

-----

1: Called literally the Blood-eyed Demon? (광혈마가) probably a compound between 광혈 bloodshot and red-eyed (yes i combined those two words) and maybe 악마가 demon. I'm just using tyrant so I don't have to keep calling it a demon since the word gets too redundant and the context feels enough.

2: [아수라 길드의 B급 헌터 리오 싱.] Asura guild B class hunter Rio Singh is the literal translation however I changed it to A class because the other chapters classify him as A rank and not B rank.

# 178

[Phew, that's enough to relieve me.]

“.....”

Suho was dumbfounded as he looked at Arsha's relieved expression.

"Is this a nest or a prison cell?"

[Actually, if you think about the fact that a dragon will be born from that egg, this might not be enough.]

Arsha was still feeling reluctant about Kamish's egg.

[The dragon race is already an apex predator from the moment it is born, especially a red dragon's hatchling, which breathes fire from the moment it is born, although you may not know that because you are a human.]

[So what! Our young liege was able to fly when he was just an infant!]

[.....]

At Beru's words, Arsha had no choice but to keep her mouth shut. Come to think of it, Suho here wasn't normal either. No, in a way, he was the most sinister of them all.

*'How did I end up living in such a horrible place...'*

Arsha chewed her lip and sighed at the harsh circumstances in which she was placed.

Suho asked Arsha. "How do you know about the dragon race?"

[gathering information is my specialty.]

Certainly, her ability was to create a multitude of bodies specialized in intelligence gathering. In fact, even at this moment, her worker bees are traveling all over the country looking for villains.

"So do you know how to hatch a dragon's egg?"

[I've heard that dragon tribes periodically baptized them in magic in order to make them hatch.]

"A magic baptism? What's that?"

[To put it simply, it's a constant stream of magic. This egg is too small to be called a dragon clan's egg. Perhaps their parents died early and they didn't receive a magic baptism, so they didn't manage to grow up normally.]



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Arsha's guess was quite accurate. Kamish's egg was the smallest of the eggs found by Cha Hae-In in the Tomb of Dragons. Suho's expression hardened slightly at that. "Does that mean this egg may not hatch?"

[I'm not sure exactly.]

"Well, if it's a baptism of magic. . ."

Hearing Arsha's explanation, Suho thought for a moment. "Does that mean no one other than its parents is able to give them mana?"

[I'm not sure, although it wouldn't hurt to try.]

"Then that means I can do it."

[What?]

Suho smirked and pressed his palm to the surface of Kamish's egg in the nest. Then he slowly pulled up the essence of mana in his body and began to push it into the egg little by little.

**Shuaaa!!**

[Oh my god, how can a human being do this!?!?!]

Seeing the delicate magic control ability, Arsha was amazed once more. Considering that Suho is human, this was indeed a great ability. It's as natural for demons to use magic as breathing, but humans have only been using magic for two years. However, Suho has awakened for an even less period than that....

[I told you that our young liege was already a child prodigy from the time he was an infant.]

[.....]

It was Beru who shrugged his shoulders from the sidelines. She was so used to Beru's arm flailing, so Arsha tried not to force herself to look in his direction and instead went to tell Suho about her concerns.

[Suho, while I think you are capable of doing such a feat, I don't think you might be able to make it hatch.]

"Why is that?" Suho asked, continuing to infuse magic into Kamish's eggs.

[Dragons are inherently a race with tremendous magical power, so they are constantly fed enormous amounts of mana of their parent dragons until the eggs hatch.]

That's why the baptism of magic was also called a "Mana Shower." Even if the egg doesn't take in all of that enormous magic power, it continues to inject it into an overflow of magic.

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[I know that Suho *nim* is a great person, but no matter how much magic power you pour into the egg until you exhaust it, it's just the blood of a bird's foot compared to the magic power of the dragon race... huh?]

As she spoke, Arsha felt something strange. Somehow, the magic power that Suho poured into Kamish's egg... seemed never ending. And at some point, Suho put something in his mouth and kept drinking.

**Gulp. Gulp. Gulp.**

[Item: Use the Intermediate Mana Potion.]

[Item: Use the Intermediate Mana Potion.]

[Item: Use the Intermediate Mana Potion.]

.....

"Don't worry, I have plenty of mana." There was a confident smile on Suho's lips as he was constantly drinking magic potions. A well-founded confidence too as his gaze stood on his status window, constantly going up and down in real time.

[MP : 358/6,410]

[MP : 1,410/6,410]

[MP : 431/6,410]

[MP : 2,160/6,410]

.....

"Even if I'm not a dragon, I can use mana all day long as I have gold."

[Oh my gosh...]

Arsha opened her mouth in amazement at the sight. *It's a Mana Shower!* Suho's mana was infinitely baptizing the egg of Kamish!

[Kekeke oh my young liege...]

[.....]

Beru was ready to blabber on his accomplishments again. Meanwhile Arsha wished someone could explain to her why Beru was the most excited even when Suho, the person in question, was silent as a rock.

**Shuaaa~~**

After some time, Suho nodded at the sight of Kamish's egg, which was absorbing his magic power so endlessly. "I guess in the future I will have to earn a handful of gold on the side."

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Considering that if he wanted to use magic to the level of the dragon race, he would have to build up on quite a lot of potions.

\*\*\*

Lim Do-Gyun, a "former" university administrative assistant, for some reason, had been doing a similar job since he became a hunter. The only thing that has changed was that the professor, who had always given him tricky and difficult tasks to work with, was now the boss named 'Sung Suho'.

"Alright, let's see..."

For the first time in a long time, Lim Do-Gyun took out the tablet PC he used when he used to work in the school's teaching room and started writing in his journal.

"The conditions of the dungeons that Suho wants . . ."

1. Dungeons where the Demon Factories are likely to be hidden.

(Where demon-type monsters appear?)

(Rumors about Stardust, or about missing people?)

- 2) Dungeons where you can earn a lot of gold.

(What? You mean a place where you can get expensive materials?)

Brainstorming took place in Lim Do-Gyun's head as he jotted down a lot of thoughts. His eyes and ears continued to do everything he could to find dungeons worthy of all those conditions. First of all, he went through his connections.

"Hello? Father, this is your number right? If you're not busy, I have something to ask you." He called his father, whom he still had a strained relationship with.

"Oh, hello? This is CEO Yoo Jin-Ho's secretary's office, right? CEO Yoo Jin-Ho told me to ask here if I need anything. Yes, all I need is information..." He called the secretary of that great, wonderful big company.

"Oh! Vice-guildmaster Baek Miho? I'm Lim Do-Gyun, Vice-Guildmaster of the Woojin Guild! If it's possible could you maybe share some information about the dungeons...."

He usually tended to be quite fearful in a lot of things, but as a former teaching assistant, his skills excelled in public spaces quite a lot. In less than an hour, they were able to find dungeons that met all the requirements Suho had asked for.

"Suho— I mean Guildmaster! I've listed the dungeons I've found and posted them here! I've prioritized them according to my own criteria, so I think you can tackle them in this order!"

[Kiek. Since when has this coward been so capable?]

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"Haha..." Even Beru was surprised, making Do-Gyun feel cathartic, but still riding on pure momentum, he proudly conveyed his demands to Suho. "So, does this mean I don't have to go into the dungeon this time with you?"

"What? No, you still have to go in."

"....."

Lim Do-Gyun became sullen in an instant.

\*\*\*

Thus, Suho's guild began to go around the dungeons found by Lim Do-Gyun and attack the Demon Factories one by one. The money was plenty. A huge amount of money from the sale of all the dungeon resources mined in Busan was deposited into the guild's account. Suho used the money to buy the dungeons that Lim Do-Gyun found without hesitation, and immediately began to attack them. Having already teamed up in Busan, the shadow soldiers led by Suho thoroughly defeated the dungeons at a truly remarkable speed.

[Leveled up!]

[Leveled up!]

.....

The speed of leveling up wasn't bad either. Suho did a good job of starting a guild since it's a lot easier to get dungeons as one instead of simply freelancing.

He also didn't just level up by going around the dungeon. The expensive materials obtained from the beasts they killed were sold in the shop window to earn gold. Mainly for the potions, but in order to speed up the battle, he also bought a defensive item from the store and wore it.

[Item: Senior Knight's Breastplate]

[Difficulty of obtaining: B]

[Type: Armor]

[Physical damage reduction + 7%

(If your strength is less than 80, your movements will be slow.)]

[Item: Helmet of a Senior Knight]

[Difficulty of obtaining: B]

[Type: Armor]

[Physical Damage Reduction +6%

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(If your strength is less than 80, your movements will be slow.)]

In the meantime, due to the lack of strength stats, he also bought items that he had only coveted in the store. The higher the defense, the lower the price of the potion is and the faster the battle tends to be.

*'Somehow, it looks like it's becoming more and more of a full-fledged tank.'* Suho was a little dumbfounded by his own way of fighting. He was supposed to be a necromancer through and through considering his shadow summoning abilities, and yet here he was acting more like a tanker than a summoner.

Just then, the shadow soldiers followed the rest of the demons that he hadn't finished dealing with yet, and started destroying them.

"...should I say I'm a 'Necrotanker'?" Suho grinned and continued to attack the dungeons.

Finally, he actually discovered a Demon Factory. Unfortunately they were an ordinary(?) Demon Factory, so they didn't get any information about the Foreign Religion. Instead, he was able to obtain the Demon Stones that had been stored there as the material for the Stardust, which made it into Beru's mouth once again and Suho went back to the Shadow Dungeon and started to drink the potions.

The cycle repeats as more mana is infused into Kamish's egg until all of a sudden...

[Suho.]

Arsha, the Queen Bee, spoke to Suho with a serious expression.

[I think my worker bees have found something.]

# 179

These days, Queen Bee Arsha has been under considerable psychological pressure. Well that was to be inevitable since the main body was already held hostage in the Shadow Dungeon, so Suho had complete control over her lifeline.

In addition, since Suho was the priest of Queresha, the Queen of Insects and Plague Monarch, she was in a position where she had to look as good as possible for him. However, the problem was that no matter how hard she tried to impress him, there was not much she could do for him. At most, it's all about collecting information by managing the worker bees...

Then when Lim Do-Gyun, who had been considered a useless human being by her standards, suddenly began to show tremendous work ability, she couldn't help but feel impatient.

*'I can't believe I have to feel competitive towards a person like that!'* Are there any more embarrassing situations like this? It was a very unpleasant situation for Arsha, who had treated Lim Do-Gyun as less than a worker bee until now. But what can she do? She had to do something to avoid falling outside the eyes of Suho. At least, shouldn't she be more helpful than Lim Do-Gyun, who is the lowest in Woojin's Guild?

*'I can't do this. Let's increase the number of worker bees as much as possible.'* She never thought that her subordinates were not enough, but she decided to increase it tenfold either way.

*'After all, I can simply increase the number of worker bees to as many as I want since they don't have the innate ability to fight!'* Arsha had never increased worker bees in this way before. Quality was more important than quantity to keep the Queen Bee safe. However, since her main body was now staying in a safe(?) hiding place called the Shadow Dungeon, she decided to compete with quantity rather than quality.

**Woooooooooooooooooooo**

In this way, the number of worker bees under Arsha's control began to increase. The way Arsha increased her load was extremely simple. She just let the ordinary worker bees on earth feed on her own royal jelly. Even with just a sip of royal jelly on a human basis, she could have an entire beehive under her command. And like that...

**Woooooooooooooooooooo**

Arsha's worker bees were scattered all over the country. *'Until now, we only dealt with information about the villains, but from now on, we will gather all the information about Demon Factories, Stardust, and the Foreign Religion!'*

**Woooooooooooooooooooo**

The worker bees busily flapped their wings and began collecting as much information as Arsha requested. But worker bees have a bad brain. It's because she didn't give them any

special abilities and instead kept increasing their numbers. So, the task of receiving and analyzing the information they asked for had to be done by Arsha herself, the queen bee.

[Kugh. What a headache...]

The flood of information overflowing in her head made Arsha's eyes almost fall to the back of her head. But Arsha did not give up. The Queen Bee's pride did not allow her to step back like this. Arsha desperately tried to control and cram the information sent by over tens of thousands of worker bees into her head.

Then, an unexpected phenomenon happened.

[.....!]

Arsha's consciousness, which had been in command of so many bees, suddenly expanded widely as if exploding with a bang.

[Ahhh... !]

Arsha sat down and trembled all over.

**Crack!**

A transparent skin had been finally peeled off from her body.

[The Monarch of Plagues, Queen of Insects, watches the Queen Bee.]

"Hmm?" Suho, who was in the middle of a daily quest, suddenly had a puzzled look at the message he heard from Queresha. His limbs were crushed and he didn't have the strength to raise her head, but Queresha's message was continued to be heard.

[The Monarch of Plagues, Queen of Insects remembers the name of Queen Bee Arsha.]

'...The name of Arsha?'

It was the first time that Queresha had mentioned Arsha's name so directly. Queresha was the Queen of all insects. Among them, the Queen Bee Arsha was just a bug, a member of her family who did not place much value on it. Yet so suddenly Queresha remembered Arsha's name?

*'I don't know what's going on, but could this increase the chances that Arsha will become a descendant of Queresha?'*

[Forty one.]

".....?!" Suho snapped out of his thoughts and protested at Ammut's stern voice that suddenly came over him. "Forty-two!"

[Wrong posture. Forty one.]

"Ugh."

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Suho gritted his teeth and resumed push-ups at Ammut's resoluteness that never backed down. And just when he had barely finished the daily quest, Arsha appeared in front of Suho.

[Suho, I think my worker bees found something.]

Arsha conveyed the information she received from the worker bees to Suho with a slightly serious expression.

[I think there's a strange 'superstition' among lower hunters these days.]

"What do you mean by superstition?"

[After the Association designated Stardust as an illegal drug, the number of hunters who wear Stardust as accessories has increased.]

"Accessories? What do you mean?" Making Stardust into jewelry? When Suho made a puzzled expression, Arsha continued her explanation.

[It hardens Stardust like a stone and makes it into a necklace to wear. Every time you enter a dungeon, you can pray to that necklace.]

"... Pray?" Suho's senses spiked. It wasn't illegal as long as you didn't eat Stardust. But you dare to make it into a necklace and even pray on it? There's no way the mana would be amplified like that, right?

"Yeah they do... I saw it on Hunternet recently." Just in time, Lim Do-Gyun, who had passed out while training with Suho, seemed to have woken up, and he crawled up beside him and intervened in the conversation. When Suho opened his mouth and fed the potion, Lim Do-Gyun stood up with a brightened face, and continued his explanation.

"Recently, as Stardust became illegal, people who bought large amounts of Stardust in advance went into a frenzy. Suddenly, they had a lot of malicious inventory. However, the association has no obligation to pay them back," Besides, it was discovered that people were burned alive during the production process, so no one wanted to eat it anymore. "So, at some point, an atmosphere of praying to console the spirits of those who died during the production of Stardust began to emerge."

"Hmm."

"And then there were even people who made necklaces out of the Stardust they bought before it became illegal and sold them. It's illegal to dope magic with Stardust, but this kind of thing is a stock that started with a strangely good meaning." While listening to Lim Do-Gyun's explanation, Suho had a serious one on his face.

*'They want to honor the souls of the dead.'*

This in itself was obviously a good thing. However, the object of the prayer was the problem. 'Blue Mist', the most basic of Stardust materials, is the magical power of outer space that melts the boundaries of dimensions. In other words, it was the gateway for the invasion of the Itarims.



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But why pray to the Blue Mist?

"This...is kind of weird."

[I said it because I thought it might be related to the Foreign Religion in some way.]

At Arsha's words, Suho nodded. Looking back, nothing like this was accidental. Especially when it involved the Itarim. "Arsha, the hunters who pray to the necklace..."

[My worker bees already know who they are.]

"No, rather than capturing those hunters, find out who is selling the Stardust necklaces to them."

[Ah...!]

Arsha's eyes widened at Suho's words.

[All right! I'll find out right away.]

Arsha responded quickly and sent thoughts to the worker bees across the country. and after some time...

[I found them.]

Since the bees had already found hunters wearing necklaces, it was not difficult to find the route they obtained the necklaces from. It wasn't illegal in the first place, so they didn't even think about living in secret. However, Arsha went one step further and investigated where the people who sold the necklace came from.

[There are many distributors, but all of them were bringing Stardust necklaces from one region.]

"A region? Where is it?"

[Yangpyeong, Gyeonggi province.]

"Yangpyeong?!"

[.....?]

[Keyek?]

The moment they heard Suho's reaction, Arsha and Beru, who were next to him, made a puzzled expression.

[Little Lord, are you alright?]

At Beru's question, Suho put a hand on his forehead with a serious expression and sighed.

"There...That is where my grandfather and grandmother live."

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[KIEK?!]

\* \* \*

Suho's grandfather Sung Il-Hwan. As a child, Suho remembered his grandfather as a firefighter who always smelled of smoke. Sung Il-Hwan never quit his job as a firefighter, even when his son, Sung Jin-Woo, nagged him to retire and rest.

Eventually, until the moment of retirement, he retired while working with young juniors in active duty. Suho still vividly remembered his grandfather's retirement ceremony.

"*Sunbae nim!* <sup>(1)</sup> Thank you for all your hard work!"

"Thank you so much!!"

"We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!!"

...

The grandfather proudly came down from the podium after finishing his retirement age, applauded by all his colleagues and junior firefighters. Even on that day, the faint smell of ash still lingered in his grandfather's fireman's uniform.

After finishing his lifelong work, Suho's grandfather went down to the countryside to live on a small farm with his grandmother. Of course they lived in a rural place, but they in fact, did not escape the Gyeonggi province. Yangpyeong, located in Gyeonggi. It is a place that is moderately far and moderately close to Seoul and at the same time has beautiful natural scenery such as wide plains and valleys. It was none other than Yoo Jin-Ho who provided a suitable house for Suho's grandfather and grandmother to live in.

But why Yangpyeong?

*'That's the place where my grandfather lives!'* Thinking that there might be an organization related to the Foreign Religion there, Suho became desperate.

Although there was someone who was far more restless than him right now.

Beru.

[Suho we have to go there immediately! This is a really big deal!]

It was only then that Beru remembered what he had forgotten until now.

Dammit why! Did you think of it only now!!!

[This entirely that villain's fault! He deserves to be severely punished, but now it's too urgent!]

"What's the matter? Is there something I don't know about?" Suho started to run straight to Yangpyeong where his grandfather was. Beside him, Beru answered with a serious tone of expression.

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[Until now, we thought that the Apostles of Itarim would be aiming for National Level Hunters with vessels that could contain their power... But they may not be the only ones with potential!]

"What are you talking about?"

[The little lord's grandfather was also a hunter who received power from the Rulers in his previous life!]

".....!"

At that moment, Suho sped up to Yangpyeong with all his might.

-----

1: Sunbae is used to refer to a coworker who is in the same field of work as you but for a far longer period of time. A senior basically.

# 180

During the journey, Beru told Suho about the past of Sung Il-Hwan that he knew.

Sung Il-Hwan: Suho's grandfather and the father of the Shadow Monarch, Sung Jin-Woo. He was once a superlative hunter who embraced the power of a Ruler. The exact grade is unknown. The reason for this is that at the time of his awakening, there was still no clear definition of his rank as a hunter. However, Beru said that he would definitely be S-rank.

After all, it was possible to accept the power of the rulers with that kind of body.

[And it is very likely that your grandfather has awakened as a hunter again, just as he once did!]

There is no age limit for a hunter's awakening. A constitution suitable for mana is innate. This is because it is the domain of talent in the first place that is regarded, instead of the age.

That's why the "former hunters" they've met so far have awakened the same power as they did in the era before. So Sung Il-Hwan was probably no exception. Just one thing. Regardless of talent, there were different periods of magical awakening.

Not every S-rank had gained their powers at the same time after all.

[Maybe he is still in the process of awakening!]

"That's even more worrying."

[Ah! You're right!]

Suho hadn't heard of his grandfather's awakening yet. *'If my grandfather were to become a hunter, it would have been just like his old firefighter days. He would have even set up a guild of a similar nature.'*

Considering the personality of Sung Il-Hwan, there was a high probability that he had not yet awakened, which made Suho feel even more anxious. The perfect vessel for the Apostles of Itarim to aim towards has not yet awakened its power!

**Shinggg!!**

Gritting his teeth, Suho's silver hair fluttered in the strong wind. The speed was much faster than that of the Baek Miho, which had carried Suho on her back during the previous crisis from the villain Lee Minsung. Compared to back then, Grey was now stronger in his body, and his strength stats had increased tremendously.

"Who is that guy!"

"Be careful everyone!"

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"Who's going to report it to the Association?!"

Numerous drivers on the road were surprised to see Suho. Occasionally, people were seen pulling out their phones and calling the police or the Hunter Association. But Suho didn't care, instead he ran and ran as fast as he could. As a result, he arrived at Yangpyeong at the speed of light.

**Shuaaaaaaah~~**

Paldang Dam.

Along with the noise of the river flowing, a thick mist obscures the view in front of him.

Yangpyeong, Gyeonggi Province, is divided into two pathways on the South Han River. In areas near rivers that connect to the South Korean River, water mist often appears as such. In particular, the Paldang Dam was a place that held a lot of water compared to the other rivers, so the water mist was even worse.

**Shuaaaaaaah~~**

*"Huh?"*

Running through the thick mist, Suho instantly felt a strange sensation that cannot be described in words. It seems that the sensory stats that had increased considerably due to leveling up have been triggered, but it felt a little different than usual.

*"What could it be?"* Suho squinted his eyes, scanning his surroundings and expanding his senses.

The situation only became more bizarre. He wasn't able to feel any signs of life or demons around him.

*What the hell.*

From the moment he stepped into Yangpyeong, a certain feeling of discomfort continued to bother his senses.

"Beru."

[Got it.]

This wasn't his mind playing tricks anymore. Beru immediately began to scan his surroundings in earnest, picking things up with his antennae. Meanwhile, Suho pulled out his cell phone and called his grandfather.

He had already called his grandparents before leaving, but no one answered. Although this in itself was a common occurrence. They had gotten more relaxed once they became farmers, so they didn't usually have their cell phones at all times.

"...They aren't answering."

Listening to the never-ending beep, Suho furrowed his brow.

[... Do you not know their address?]

"I don't." At Beru's question, Suho nodded a little hesitantly. "For the last five years (1), I haven't been well." In fact... The same would be true for anyone.

Two of his parents suddenly disappeared overnight, and how many people can stay sane there?

"...It was overwhelming."

Suho smiled bitterly as he recalled how he felt at that time. *I know everything now, but at that time I really felt like the sky was falling.*

He had realized something back then. How weak and insignificant he really was.

"My parents were missing, and there was really nothing I could do as a high school student."

What did he do? The obvious thing first was to report them missing to the police. Then he contacted his relatives and let them know what was going on.

He kept watching from the sidelines as the adults who came to visit had a serious conversation with the police... *Sitting at home waiting and waiting for my parents to contact me. I started to wonder when I would suddenly get a call, so I didn't let go of my phone for a moment and held it tightly... It was the best I could do.*

"Then my uncle came to me and said: Suho, leave these things to the adults and stick to your schoolwork as usual. That's what your parents really want."

Suho had no choice but to comply. His uncle, Yoo Jin-Ho, was a well-known chaebol(2) in Korea. He said he was doing everything in his power to find his missing parents and that there was nothing Suho could do as a high school student.

And so Suho went back to school.

"...But you know what?" Suho, who remembered the bad memories of that time, asked Beru with a slightly complicated expression.

"What do you think my grandfather was doing at that time?" He didn't wait for Beru's answer and spoke the answer himself.

"It's really strange... Grandpa was still working as usual. Even though his son was missing, he was out there saving others."

[Kiek?]

At that, a twinkle appeared in Beru's eyes for a moment.

"He doesn't keep answering my phone. So instead I'll have to ask my uncle." When Suho's grandparents were not answering his phone, he immediately called his uncle, Yoo Jin-Ho.

However, at this time, Yoo Jin-Ho was at work, so he couldn't make a phone call, and Suho tried to contact his aunt as the next best option.

- ¡Oh goodness! ¿Suho *ni is that you?*

Luckily, he finally got a call through.

"Auntie! Can you give me the address of my grandfather's house?"

-Yes? But why all of a sudden?

There was a hint of surprise in the voice of Suho's aunt "Sung Jin-Ah" over the receiver. Well, this reaction is understandable. As he had just told Beru, his relationship with his grandfather had become a little estranged since then. Suho smiled wryly and picked the words out of his mouth.

"It's just... It's been a long time since I've seen him."

-Oh alright then! That's so thoughtful of you, Suho! This auntie of yours will text you the address right away! Oh, wait! Don't you want to go with your aunt?

"¿Yes— No, I mean you don't have to..."

-No. Even if it weren't for you, I was going to stop by anyway.

Suho immediately refused because she feared that her aunt would get involved in dangerous things, but her aunt's stubbornness was greater than he expected. On this occasion, he felt the willingness to unravel the relationship between Suho and his grandfather.

-Suho. How about this? I'm also coming home from work soon, so come to Ahjin Hospital right away.

He froze. Suho's expression hardened.

"...Um, what do you mean Ahjin Hospital?"

His aunt reacted even more suspiciously.

-Oh my, You didn't know? This auntie of yours set up a hospital in Yangpyeong.

"...What?"

- So you really didn't know?

"....."

Suho realized once again just how disconnected from his family he had been.

\* \* \*

Suho arrived at Ahjin Hospital in Yangpyeong in less than a second.

"Suho!" Sung Jin-Ah, dressed in a white doctor's gown, greeted Suho. "How did you get here so fast as soon as you hung up? Were you nearby?"

"Hi auntie, how are you?"

Suho's aunt and the younger sister of the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo, Sung Jin-Ah was a doctor who just so happened to set up a hospital in Yangpyeong. Ahjin Hospital was not a huge hospital, but it was famous for its size and each of its facilities were amazing. Suho looked at the name of the hospital and asked Sung Jin-Ah.

"Aunt, could it be...?"

"Yes, that's right. This is a hospital built on the foundation of 'Ahjin Soft.' "

In other words, it was no different from a hospital founded by Sung Jin-Ah's husband, Yoo Jin-Ho's company. Saying that, Sung Jin Ah smiled bitterly.

"There was a little bit of back-and-forth when we built this."

"What do you mean?"

"As you may have seen, there are a lot of rich people living in Yangpyeong. Rich people who have retired from old age, to be precise."

"Oh." Suho was convinced. He had seen a lot of them on the way here, since there are a lot of cottages around here that look more extravagant than usual. From this point of view, it was just the right situation to say that a large corporation such as Ajin Soft had built medical facilities for the rich. But in fact, the reason was another.

Sung Jin-Ah said a little frustrated.

"I don't know if you know, but this neighborhood is reasonably far from Gangnam(3) and moderately close, so it's the perfect location to retire and build a country house to live in. That's why I recommended this place when your grandfather and grandmother said they were going to retire." As Sung Jin-Ah said, Yangpyeong, which Seoul-ites generally think of, was a good place to live a relaxed life with nature after retirement. Enjoy healing and relaxing in nature, but it's not too far from Seoul, so it's a good place for your children to visit.

"There's a saying that goes: My bed is in Yangpyeong, but my daily life is in Seoul. Although when I finally let them live here, I suddenly became worried as I noticed there aren't too many big hospitals around here!" Even if they lived in a cottage with nature, the most important thing for the elderly was that there was a medical facility nearby. After realizing this, Sung Jin-Ah decided to build a hospital near her parents.

"So I set up a hospital, and people gradually started coming from around here." However, there was another reason why Sung Jin-Ah was actively chatting with Suho.

"....So you've decided to reconcile with your grandfather now?"



"We've never fought, you know."

"Yes. That's right. But my dad, or rather, your grandfather, has always been an aloof person. You know, there was a time when your dad suddenly ran away from home for two years when he was in middle school."

"...I've heard it from my grandfather."

Sung Jin-Ah's words flashed a picture of his grandfather saying the same thing in Suho's mind.

*-Originally, it was overwhelming that your dad suddenly disappeared for such a long time. Don't worry too much, He'll be back this time as casually as he had done back then.*

*- Stop trying to comfort me like this!*

That's when it started the moment Suho fell in bad terms with his grandfather.

"Suho, we are here. Told you it was really close to the hospital, eh?" Before he knew it, he saw the paddy field that his grandfather and grandmother had cultivated in front of the guard. Suho immediately expanded his senses.

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1: So there is another fall out here because the sentence is literally “지난 5년간, 내가 진짜 제정신이 아니었거든.” [*For the past five years I've been really out of my mind*] instead of the usual 2 years that we saw the Cataclysm appear. So (and god forgive if i'm wrong but I was just noticing this) I think the disappearance of both Jinwoo and Haein happened almost 3 years *before* the Cataclysm did. And the next sentences after did affirm that in some way.

2: Yoo Jin-Ho is part of a large industrial South Korean conglomerate run and controlled by the Yoo family.

3: The main city, Seoul.

Again thank you to u/OblapOliveira for the printing method so these translations could be done faster and a thousand apologies for not thanking you earlier.

# 181

Sung Il-Hwan's house was quite modest compared to other cottages in Yangpyeong. He only had a small paddy field and a greenhouse built around it.

"It seems a bit small, doesn't it? I told him to make it bigger, but your grandfather said that if it's big, it will be harder to clean it..." Suho listened to Sung Jin-Ah's words from one of his ears as he focused on his senses. Suddenly, the expression on his face became serious.

*'...It's deserted.'*

Suho's senses scanned all the greenhouses and rice paddies that spread around his grandfather's house, but there was still no sign of his grandfather.

"Beru."

**Shuaaa**

At Suho's glance, Beru's shadow stretched out quickly to scan his surroundings.

"Oh my, are they out again?" No matter how much she rang the doorbell, Jin-Ah didn't get an answer, so she tilted her head. She wasn't too worried about them since they usually went out a lot to farm. They were also very minimalist for their age. "Well that is to be expected since they never like to stay in the house for too long. I also set up a hospital for them and yet they've never gotten sick either. Of course, it's a good thing but..."

Sung Jin-Ah smiled and pressed the password for the front door, which she had known in case a situation like this had appeared. The door opened.

**Titititi.**

**T-ring!**

"Suho, I'll go in first and you wait..." But as the front door opened, and their eyes caught the inside of the house, a mess appeared in front of them.

Sung Jin-Ah and Suho's expressions hardened at the same time.

"What is this....."

For a moment their hearts sank. Out in the open there were scattered objects everywhere. This was quite the contrast to the always neatly clean and tidy house that Jin-Ah was familiar with.

"Mom?" With a chill penetrating the corners of Sung Jin-Ah's chest, many thoughts started to pass through her head. "Mom! Are you at home?!" Sung Jin-Ah's complexion quickly turned pale and she began to search all over the house in search of her parents.

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Suho's gaze, on the other hand, was centered on something else. From the beginning, he knew no one was here right now. So instead he looked for something else.

*'Their cell phone.'*

Suho pulled out his phone again and tried to call his grandfather. Suddenly he heard the sound of a cell phone coming from the corner of the living room.

His grandfather's cell phone, which was plugged into the charger, was ringing alone.

When Jin-ah found out about this, she contemplated the situation. "No, why would dad leave his cellphone here? Where's my mom's cell phone then?" This time, Sung Jin-Ah called Suho's grandmother, Park Kyung-Hye.

Whether this was lucky or not, Park's cellphone was never found inside the house. "Perhaps she took her cell phone with her? No, how could it be that they left their house like this?"

Someone else was just as anxious.

[My young liege! I looked in the garage and there was a parked car!]

Just in time, Beru, who had been looking around, whispered to Suho, who then went straight outside and checked the garage.

"Su- Suho! Where are you going!" Sung Jin-Ah followed Suho out and opened her eyes to find a truck parked quietly in the garage. "Why is the car here? They didn't even drag the car out?" Sung Jin-Ah's expression became even more serious. There was a long stretch of paddy fields around Sung's house, and it was difficult to go anywhere without a car.

"Arsha."

Suho said, looking down at his feet with a scared face.

[Yes.]

Immediately, Arsha's answer came from the Shadow Dungeon.

"Do you have your worker bees in Yangpyeong?"

[This is my first time in Yangpyeong, so there aren't many, but there are many farmhouses nearby, so I can increase them as much as you want.]

"Get started on that."

[Yes, I will.]

**Buzzzzzz**

At that moment, the sound of bees' wings suddenly came from all directions. The first thing Arsha did was to look at the picture frames hanging in the house. Then, after carefully examining the faces of Suho's grandfather and grandmother, he scattered the worker bees in

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all directions. The worker bees in Yangpyeong began to change into Arsha's worker bees by the minute. However, Suho was not so relieved.

Just the thought of his elderly grandfather and grandmother having only lost contact with them was serious enough. But what if we add to this the possibility that their disappearance could also be connected to the Foreign Religion?

"Gray."

**Shuaaaaaaa**

Above Suho's shadow, Gray the little wolf appeared.

"Ah!" Sung Jin-Ah was momentarily surprised by the appearance, but she immediately calmed down because she had learned beforehand from her husband that Suho had already awakened. Instead of being too shocked, a sudden idea had popped inside her head. "Right! There was the Hunters Association!"

Fortunately, not far from here was a branch of the Hunter Association. It has been building a cooperative relationship with Ahjin Hospital, the best hospital in Yangpyeong, for some time now. "Suho! This auntie of yours has an acquaintance at the association! I'll ask them for help!" Sung Jin-Ah said while she urgently called the Association.

"Gray, find anything that's useful. Raikan, are you listening now?" Suho decided to use everything he had at his disposal.

[The Beast Monarch, King of Beasts watches you.]

Raikan's gaze centered on him. Looking in the direction where the presence was felt, Suho opened his mouth. "You know what's going on, right? Can you tell by the smell of magic what happened here?" It would be much more efficient to pamper a dead monarch himself than to let Gray do all the work. Realizing Suho's intentions, a dark smile appeared on Raikan's lips.

[The Beast Monarch, King of Beasts offers a deal in exchange for help.]

"What else do you suggest?" As expected, the dead monarch did not readily help.

[The Beast Monarch explains that he needs sacrifices in order to exert his influence.]

It was true. Originally, a deceased monarch could not have any influence on this life. However, there were cases where this was possible, and that was the method of "sacrifice" in which offerings were made and prayers were offered.

Suho, who understood the situation, nodded obediently. After all, the condition that Raikan demanded the other day was that he finally handed over the items— that had become useless to him— to Gray.

"Alright. What do you want? I don't have much time, so tell me quickly."

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[The Beast Monarch raises the corners of his mouth to say that this is not a bad proposition for you, either.]

At that moment, Raikan's presence began to grow more and more. It was then...

"Suho! She is in the Association!" The words burst out of Sung Jin-Ah's mouth, who was on the phone with a serious face. Immediately, Suho's head turned to her.

"Who? Grandma?"

"Yes! One of the staff members drove her there!"

And at the same time...

[The Beast Monarch sighs.]

Raikan's growing presence faded away. Whether he helped or not, Suho's attention had already drifted away from him.

"No, why did grandma go to the Hunter's Association? Is grandpa there too?"

"No... That's why she went there."

"What?"

To Suho's question, Sung Jin Ah replied with a chuckle. "Well, my dad... Your grandfather..."

Upon hearing Sung Jin-Ah's story, Suho shouted, his expression hardened.

"Gray!"

"Woof!!"

Gray, who had been sniffing his surroundings at the abstract command, swelled his size significantly.

"Get on!" Suho put Sung Jin-Ah on Gray's back before running straight to the Yangpyeong branch of the Hunter Association, where his grandmother was.

\*\*\*

Min Dae-Seok, the head of the Yangpyeong branch of the Hunter Association, was a man full of complaints.

*'Personal change? What is this? A demotion?'*

As in any country, the Hunter Association had branches throughout Korea. And depending on the peculiarities of the jurisdiction, the work of the Association's staff varied greatly. Of course, the most basic tasks were quite similar. Stabilizing security while the guilds attacked the dungeons. And since they didn't know when or where the gates would occur, they searched the area all year round to detect anomalies.

But there was a problem here. No matter how much you search, what if dungeons rarely appear in your jurisdiction? Will citizens like it now that they can live in peace? There are so many different personalities in the world, and sometimes some people get fed up with that comfort.

"No, why should someone like me rot all his youth in the countryside like this! Why am I stuck in a place like this!"

*'....Here he goes again.'*

*'Look away.'*

*'If you make eye contact for no reason, you'll get shouted at like last time.'*

There is no work to be done around. In this peaceful daily life that seems to last forever, the branch manager Min Dae-Seok keeps having a bad temper. The only way for his subordinates to deal with his tantrums was to do their best to pretend they didn't see.

But the biggest problem they had to sigh about was that he wasn't really complaining because he didn't *have* a job.

*'Despite having no work ...'*

*'Complaints keep coming in.'*

*'But all the cases are taken over to the police station because we don't have the jurisdiction.'*

The employees, who were familiar with the usual working style of the branch manager, just sighed quietly. However, there was also some ambiguity whenever they should or not agree with Min Dae-Seok.

It's only been two years since the Hunter Association was founded. There was still no complete separation between the duties of the police and the work of the Hunter Association in the event of a gate related incident.

Either way, if you put it on your nose, it's a nose ring, and if you put it on your ear, it's an earring. <sup>(1)</sup> But no matter how much you face a boss like this, someone has to be brave in the end.

"Well, sir... Park Kyung-Hye is still outside."

"What? Why did that old lady come here again?! Make her go to the police station!" Min Dae-Seok, who was yawning profusely at the right time, immediately opened his eyes when he heard that.

*'I knew this was going to happen,'* the employee continued. "Oh, no. This time, we drove her here. After investigating, it seems certain that Mr. Sung Il-Hwan *is* missing..."

"So? Have her go to the police station!"

"..."

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"Hah. Got it, got it. So when and where did you say that old man had disappeared?"

At Min Dae-Seok's words, the staff member couldn't help but sigh inwardly. *'If she knew where he was then it wouldn't be a disappearance at all.'*

"If she knew where he was then it wouldn't be a disappearance at all."

"Huh?"

At the sudden sound of a cold voice, the employee realized that his thoughts had jumped out of his mouth. But fortunately, such a voice had not been directed at him.

**Kugooo!**

".....!"

".....?!"

Suddenly, a tremendous presence weighed on the air behind the employee's back.

There he stood...

Suho, who exudes so much energy that the entire floor of the Association was shaking from it.

[Use Skill: Bloodlust.]

[Use Skill: Bloodlust.]

[Use Skill: Bloodlust.]

Exposed to the terrible bloodlust head-on, the branch chief Min Dae-Seok shouted, his complexion becoming white.

"You, who— who?!" Suddenly, his body stiffened and began to float into the air. In front of him, Suho walked over and checked the name tag around his neck with a puzzled expression, as well as the other 'necklace' wrapped around his.

"The head of the branch..."

Chills crept upon his body. Why is it that even those simple words sounded out gave him goosebumps? Indeed, the sudden and terrifying sight caused the Association's employees to raise their mana at the same time.

*'¡Villain!'*

"A villain has appeared!"

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1: *"If you put it on your nose it's a nose ring, if you put it on your ear it's an earring."* A Korean idiom that means that all kinds of things can be used according to the point of view of each person. In this case, people had different opinions about Min Dae-Seok's complaints but one of them still had to step up and say something.



# 182

## **Rumble!**

Was that an earthquake? All the surrounding windows and fluorescent lamps exploded at the same time like bombs.

## **Rumble!!**

The intestines are completely chaotic. The pressure was so overwhelming that the building would be torn down at any moment, and the staff of the Hunter Association could hardly breathe properly.

"Attack!"

A few of the hunters, who managed to react, drew their weapons and pounced on Suho.

But—

## **¡BOOM!**

"¡Grrrr!"

!!!

A huge wolf appeared out of nowhere, standing in their way and roaring fiercely.

"RAWWWRR!"

[Gray uses 'Skill: Abhor the Weak'.]

['Effect: Fear' is triggered.]

[All abilities of the targets are reduced by 1% for 50 minutes.]

The appearance of a giant wolf filling the room made the hunters realize. If an attack like this has been made... Then he must have been determined to break in!

Surely this was a terror attack aimed at the Association and was thoroughly prepared!

The shocking fact only confused them even more.

No, what kind of crazy villain in this world would invade the Hunter Association! Even the famous Hwang Dong-Soo wouldn't do such crazy things!

*'What the hell are you doing this for?'*

*'Why?'*

*'Why the hell?!'*

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*'I do not understand. I really don't know!'*

No one had time to think clearly among the commotion. They barely suppressed their rising fears and charged blindly at the villain in front of them.

**Bang!**

"RAWR!"

However, at the same time as they charged, they were struck by the front paws of the giant wolf and thrown back. At the sight of some of their colleagues helplessly being slammed against the wall, the Association's staff lost all its will to fight.

*'We are going to die.'*

They had a hunch that what stood in front of them was certain death.

"Urgh!" At that moment, the head of the branch Min Dae-Seok, who was elevated in front of Suho, pulled up all the magic power and desperately resisted the bloodlust that was crushing his whole body.

He gritted his trembling teeth and glared at Suho. "You think you will be saved like this... Huh?!"

In a second, Suho reached forward, and Min Dae-Seok's body flew towards Suho's as if he was being sucked in. And as Suho's hand approached as if it were going to break the nape of his neck, Min Dae-Seok finally closed his eyes.

**Crack!**

It wasn't the nape of his neck that Suho's hand ripped off, but the chain of the necklace that hung around it instead.

"I'm going to ask." His voice was cold. When that demonic voice penetrated his ears, Min Dae-Seok shuddered in terror, chills spread across. Suho's fierce eyes were clearly etched over his frightened pupils. "And you will answer me." Suho asked, holding the necklace he was wearing in front of his face. "Where did you get this Stardust necklace?"

The Stardust necklace.

Why is he, one of the heads in the Association, wearing something that is related to the Foreign Religion? In Suho's mind right now, he was imagining all kinds of things. What is the relationship between the Foreign Religion and the Association? And does Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the association, who was once a colleague of his father, know this? But then—

At Suho's question, Min Dae-Seok squeezed his eyes shut and shouted. "...Bought— I bought it!"

"You bought it?" Suho tilted his head back. At the horror of seeing such an expression on his face, Min Dae-Seok was stunned and hurriedly changed his words.

"I'm sorry, sorry! In fact, I got it for free!"

"Free?"

"I'm so sorry! Even though I told him I would pay him back, the boss just handed it to me..."  
Going one step further, Min Dae-seok's condescending gaze turned to his subordinates scattered around him. "And I wasn't the only one who got it! All the other employees have them as well!"

".....!"

That snitching bastard! <sup>(1)</sup> The guy who is the boss at work dragged down even his subordinates! At Min Dae-Seok's sudden revelation, the expressions of his subordinates changed rapidly. They hastily covered or ripped off the Stardust necklaces they were wearing.

However, when he saw them, Suho's face, the expressionless one that had been stark until now, was a little broken.

He asked again. "Who is the boss you talked about?"

"...Huh?" Feeling a strange atmosphere for a moment, Min Dae-Seok asked, looking at Suho's eyes with a confused expression.

"I don't... Aren't you from the merchants' association?"

"..."

"We got a Stardust necklace from there..."

"...Huh?"

He stood surprised. It was Min Dae-Seok who shook his body at the slightest sigh of Suho. Soon enough, Suho's hand lowered him. Then Min Dae-Seok's body flew through the air again and forced him to sit down on a nearby chair.

".....?"

The wheels of the chair rolled on their own, and Min Dae-Seok returned to his original seat with a stiff manner.

".....?"

".....?"

Seeing this, the faces of the association employees all at once had puzzled expressions. The air was thin, the atmosphere so tense that they couldn't even breathe properly, and all their eyes instinctively followed Suho's every move. In the midst of it all, Suho walked slowly to the desk of the branch chief and slumped down on the chair across from him. Then, looking at the trembling Min Dae-Seok, he proudly stated his business for coming here.

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"Are you the branch manager? I'm here to file a complaint."

"...Ah?"

At that moment. Everyone's breath was open like a lie. All the bloodlust that had weighed down the area was gone. However, Min Dae-Seok couldn't help but look puzzled. "Me, a complaint? All of a sudden, what do you mean by that?"

"Apparently my grandfather is missing. Do you know anything?"

"???"

Only then did Min Dae-Seok's head, which had malfunctioned for a moment, creaked and began to spin a little. He soon started to recall the situation before this crazy villain had arrived and thus came to an even crazier conclusion.

"Hey, perhaps... Are you Mr. Sung Il-Hwan's grandchild?"

"Yes, my name is Sung Suho, the Guildmaster of the Woojin Guild."

"So you're not a villain...?"

"No, in fact, I'm an Association-certified villain hunter."

"...Eh?"

Suho proudly handed out his business card and his villain hunter certificate.

"Woof!"

The giant wolf grew smaller and smaller until he was a small puppy<sup>(2)</sup>, and then sat down, his nose up and his hips glued to Suho's feet. Seeing the series of appearances, Min Dae-Seok's mind suddenly became confused.

Everyone, including the staff who stood around, looked at him with a puzzled expression.

*'No, wait.'*

*'To sum it up....'*

*'You made all this ruckus just to file a complaint?!'*

Of course, no one was brave enough to say this outloud. Noticing the stares focused on him, Suho apologized with a serious expression.

"I'm sorry. I was overwhelmed after hearing about my grandfather's disappearance."

"Oh, no. No. If your family member is missing, it's understandable anyone would act like that..."

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The wheel of the chair rolled by itself, and Min Dae-Seok returned to his original position as he sat calmly. Min Dae-Seok's voice became less and less as he hurriedly waved his hands in response to Suho's apology.

The Association's office became a mess overnight. All the glass is broken, the fluorescent lamps rattle from the ceiling, and the flames crackle like ghosts. He was too sympathetic to agree that *anyone* could do such a thing, but the sight behind Suho's back was too horrible.

*'...So you didn't do this because you are a villain?'*

When he realized that the other person was not a villain, a heat rose from Min Dae-Seok's chest a second after. When the situation was settled, he was suddenly upset that he had made an unsightly appearance in front of his subordinates.

*'Aiya.... I know you're a Hunter with great powers. But isn't Korea a country that follows the law? How dare such a young kid like you make such a ruckus with just a bit of magic? What do you know about the Association!'*

Min Dae-Seok clenched his fists and glared at Suho.

*'You may be the Guildmaster of the Woojin Guild! But I'll be sure to brand you as a villain!'*

*'Only when you are the president of the association, can you give yourself that much authority!'*

Then, when Suho's eyes met his, Min Dae-Seok's stubborn expression suddenly relaxed. "Hmmm. Please compensate for the property damage."

"Of course I will."

"Thank you."

\*\*\*

By the time Suho's grandmother, Park Kyung-Hye, and Sung Jin-Ah entered the Association's office, the mess had already been cleared up. Some of the fluorescent lights were still broken, but beneath them, Suho heard about what had happened with her grandmother and aunt.

"That 's . . . First, let me apologize. The reason why we have rejected Ms. Park's complaint for the past few days is because we have determined that Sir Sung Il-Hwan is not missing." Min Dae-Seok explained to Suho as if he were making excuses based on what his subordinates had investigated so far. "You see... Mr Sung Suho's grandfather, Sung-Il-hwan, we know that his hobby is fishing. He also enjoys fishing alone, and he says he can go for two or three days at most."

"That's right." Park nodded obediently. In Yangpyeong, where the South and North Korea rivers diverge, there were quite a few secluded fishing spots. As a result, after Sung Il-Hwan came to Yangpyeong, he used to go fishing from time to time. "...But this time, there was something weird."

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"What was weird?"

"His expression."

"...Mrs Park Kyung-Hye, such abstract ideas are not helpful to the investigation at all."

After all, dealing with the elderly is so frustrating. It was Min Dae-Seok who sighed. However, when he saw Suho sitting right next to him, he couldn't help but manage his facial expressions.

"So, what expression was he wearing?"

"My husband . . . I've only had that look on my face three times so far."

"When is that?"

"The first time was when our son ran away from home."

### ***Flinch.***

At that, Suho's expression couldn't help but harden.

"When he was in junior high school, he ran away from home with a note saying he had something to do. He was gone for two years." Park Kyung-Hye said with a bitter expression, groping for memories of the past.

"I was so shocked when my husband stopped me from running to the police station." Her husband's attitude, which showed no signs of alertness when her son was missing, was incomprehensible to Park Kyung-Hye even when she looked back on it now. At first she was angry, then she was frustrated. *My son suddenly ran away from home, but which parent can keep their sanity?*

Unlike Park Kyung-Hye, Sung Il-Hwan was calm. But she also couldn't blame her husband for being *too* cold. The expression on Sung's face at the time seemed to be holding back the emotions that were about to spill out at any moment. Eventually, Park Kyung-Hye went to the police station and reported her son missing. But despite this, Sung Il-Hwan did not even pretend to look for his son.

"He even stopped me from going outside and putting up missing flyers. Often telling me those words..."

- *Let's trust our son.*

Remembering the look on her husband's face as he uttered those words, Park continued. "In the end, our son came home safely two years later. Then, as an adult, he disappeared again five years ago. This time, with his wife."

"..."

"Even then, my husband calmed me down with the same expression. *Let's trust him this time.*" Park continued. "Well, that look had appeared on his face again."

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The moment he heard those words, Suho couldn't help but be convinced.

*'Beru, maybe grandpa...'*

[Yes, I guess his memory came back again.]

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1: The realm term was 저 물귀신 같은 놈 That water Ghost! which is often referred to people who do or say wrongful things and then drag others down with them, mostly the drag others down part.

2:The original is “As if it were a lie” which is just a saying for becoming small so i just used the word puppy.

# 183

When exactly did Sung Il-Hwan regain his memories of his previous life? Beru did not know, but one thing was certain.

[The monarch's memory transcends time.]

Suho also knew what Beru was trying to say. *'The Cup of Reincarnation.'*

[God's instrument that turns back time, the Cup of Reincarnation, does not have any effect on the consciousness of higher beings such as rulers and monarchs.]

Beru recalled an old memory, just a few decades ago, in a time when all wars were over and peace came to Earth. It was that moment where Woo Jin-Chul, who lost his memory of his previous life and lived as an ordinary police officer, suddenly regained all his memories in an instant. Looking back, the reason was very simple. The reunion with Sung Jin-Woo. That 's all...

But in fact, it was by no means normal.

Who is Sung Jin-Woo? The King of Death, the great Shadow Monarch who slew all other Monarchs and brought entire planes to his feet. How much significance can an event that is directly related to such a great and noble higher being have in a person's life? Can we dare to dismiss the meeting as ordinary?

[...Mister Sung Il-Hwan was my liege's father who had lived with him for most of his life, and he has had at one point the ability of directly accepting the ruler's power into his body.]

For example, a son with the power of a monarch and a father with the power of a ruler. It's been decades since the two of them lived together in the same house.

Yoo Jin-Ho was able to regain all his memories just by touching the key to the Shadow Dungeon. *'...Given the opportunity, it's not strange to see his memories come back.'*

At Beru's words, Suho nodded in agreement. Anyway, the bottom line is that his grandfather suddenly left somewhere with the memories of his previous life.

*'But where did you go? For what?'* Several questions floated around in Suho's head. He decided to focus on the most important part for now.

*'The Itarim.'* To what extent is Itarim involved in his grandfather's disappearance? Is his Grandpa all right now? *'Let's just focus on that.'* Perhaps there is a chance that his grandfather is in a similar situation as his mother, so it was urgent to find anything as soon as possible.

Suho asked the branch manager Min Dae-Seok, who was talking with Park Kyung-Hye and Sung Jin-Ah. "So who was the last person to see my grandfather?"



Today, Suho's grandmother, Park Kyung-Hye, came here hurriedly after receiving a call from an Association employee. Until then, the Association had rejected Sung Il-Hwan's disappearance, but today they are finally convinced that he is missing.

"That... I'm not sure yet." The one who answered Suho's question was a new female employee who brought Park Kyung-Hye here. The female employee's eyes glanced at the branch manager, Min Dae-Seok, and then opened her mouth.

"There were people who saw Sung Il-Hwan at a place other than a fishing spot."

"A different place? Where is it?"

"Near the merchant Association..."

"What?!" At those words, branch manager Min Dae-Seok turned to the female employee with a visibly embarrassed expression. Then, in a low voice, he quietly threatened her. "Why would he be at the merchant Association? Can you be sure he went there and it isn't some baseless lie? Can you take responsibility for that?"

"¡Oh no! I only heard that they saw him walking in that direction, too! Even the branch manager knows. People don't fish here these days."

"Of course. Yes...hmm." Sensing the eyes of Suho's family, Min Dae-Seok suddenly cleared his throat and shut his mouth. However, since it had already been heard by Suho, there was no turning back.

"The merchant Association..."

**¡Woosh!**

Min Dae-Seok held his breath. Slowly turning his head, he could see Suho's aura was gradually becoming more and more brutal like when he first invaded this place. Suho asked while fiddling with the Stardust necklace he had ripped off Min Dae-Seok's neck earlier. "I think you said the merchants Association had given you this necklace, Right?" The words began to shorten again.

*'No, does this man have anger issues or something!?' Min Dae-Seok really wanted to cry at Suho's pressure, which seemed to explode at any moment.*

"Answer."

"Yes, yes! The Merchants Association is just a gathering of people who do business in Yangpyeong. It's like that in every town!"

"More."

"Yes! In fact, there is a separate Yangpyeong merchant Association! The Merchants Association we talked about is actually more of a private Association created by hunters active in Yangpyeong! Stardust necklaces are also made and distributed there!"

In response to Suho's question, Min Dae-Seok reflexively began to tell the truth.

At those words, Suho felt something odd. "Why do hunters create merchant Associations instead of guilds? and what for?"

There is probably no one here who doesn't know that going into a dungeon once can bring more money than spending time on such useless things. Of course, there were cases where businesses were conducted at the guild level, but that was only an incidental area.

"That, that..." Seeing Suho's cool eyes, Min Dae-Seok didn't know what to do and rolled his eyes here and there. Then, the images of the other employees trying to avoid his gaze, and the Stardust necklaces hanging around their necks...

Suho intuitively realized. *'Something is going on here.'*

### **Crack!**

At that moment, the corner of branch manager Min Dae-Seok's desk was crushed in Suho's hand. Beru whispered like a demon into Suho's ear.

[Should I just kill him? I will eat his brain and read his memory.]

Did he hear that whisper? Or did Beru's 'sincerity' work? The moment his desk was smashed, branch manager Min Dae-Seok was startled and finally opened his mouth.

"Bla— it's a black market!... Hick!" It was Min Dae-Seok who spoke recklessly and suddenly covered his mouth.

"...Black market?" Suho's eyes grew even more frightening, on the contrary, Min Dae-Seok's complexion turned pale and he hurriedly began to make excuses.

"Yeah, that's it. To be clear, I have nothing to do with it. I only heard that they were still preparing, so I, to be exact—"

"What is a black market?" When Sung Jin-Ah, who was listening to the story, asked, Min Dae-Seok sighed deeply and explained.

"That... Non-awakened people have no idea about it, of course. The black market is a direct transaction market only used by hunters."

"So a normal market?"

"Yes. To be precise, it is a place where direct transactions or auctions for tax evasion take place." Tax evasion. It was Sung Jin-Ah who understood what he said. Even for hunters with superhuman abilities, taxes were a scary law. In particular, the tax rate applied to hunters who are classified as extremely high-income earners is a whopping 50%.

Basically they take exactly half of the money earned by fighting the demons at the risk of their lives and extort it from the country. Of course, the money is used to rebuild the citizens

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who have been damaged by the dungeon or the destroyed city. And the organization that manages and supervises the exact use of the tax was the Hunter Association.

“But why is the Association turning a blind eye to the black market for tax evasion?”

“Oh no! This was going on before I came here, so I was against it at first—!”

**Crack!**

At that moment, Min Dae-Seok's desk began to be crushed like tofu in front of his eyes, gradually, slowly.

**Crack! Crack! Crack!**

“Ah...” Min Dae-Seok, who witnessed the scene, caught his breath in the feeling that sooner or later he would end up like that too. But he wasn't the only one who felt that way. Standing up from her seat, Suho looked at all the Association employees in the office with a cold gaze. At that gaze, just like Min Dae-Seok, the staff who were wearing Stardust necklaces shivered with pale faces. The legal issues against them will be resolved later by Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the Association.

Suho asked.

“So where is the Merchants Association?”

\* \* \*

Yangpyeong is wide. Its size is almost as wide as Jeju Island. However, if there is a little difference from Jeju Island, is that there are many development restrictions in Yangpyeong, such as water source protection areas and nature conservation areas. As the situation was, Yangpyeong was made up of mountains, forests, and valleys on all sides, and there were countless fishing spots. However, since the mountain is so rough, it was also an area where missing people like Sung Il-Hwan frequently appeared.

“...It is very foggy.”

[Yangpyeong is a humid area. It is because there are many dams.]

During Suho's self-talk, Quay appeared and began to talk about what he knew. Listening to that explanation, Suho was walking on a land covered in water and fog.

[Little lord, now I understand.]

Beru noticed the identity of the sense of incongruity he felt when he first set foot in Yangpyeong.

[It seems that the Blue Mist has melted into this water mist.]

“Could there be a dungeon hidden inside?”

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[Yes. Since the Blue Mist didn't flow more than the water mist itself, I think the Association didn't notice it until now.]

Quay, a former villain and Vice-Guildmaster of the Reaper Guild, recognized the value of this place at a glance.

[If I knew about this place, I too would have also wanted to create a black market.]

A place where even the existence of the gate can be hidden. It meant, in other words, a place where anything could be hidden.

"Quay, hit your head."

[Yes.]

**¡Boink!**

Unlike someone who wasn't a former villain, it was Quay who deeply sympathized with the psychology of criminals.

"I'm starting to feel it." Suho stopped walking. The magical power of the gate, which had been faintly felt as it melted into the water mist, began to grow thicker and thicker.

"Is this whole area a field type dungeon?" Esil, who was walking by Suho's side, looked around with her eyes shining. Then she finally found something. "It's a demonic totem."

"Do you know what it is for?"

"For protection barriers. It informs you when non-demons approach."

"Anything other than demons?" At those words, Suho smiled softly. "Then I'll just have to become a demon." Suho took out the '*Item: Crow Mask*' from his inventory and hid his face. A badge worn by demons working at the Stardust Factory. But, of course, it was impossible to deceive the barriers of the demons with this alone.

"Esil."

"Yes."

[Equip 'Item: Horn of Vulcan'.]

If you pretend now, you pretend till the end. Esil immediately transformed to her spiritual body and attached herself to Vulcan's horns in Suho's head. From the crow mask to the demon's horns. Suho's appearance has turned into that of a demon.

[This should be enough to fool the barrier.]

Hearing Esil's whisper, Suho proudly passed through. At that moment, the view changed, and the image of the black market that the branch manager had talked about unfolded in front of Suho.

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# 184

The scenery was one that looked as though it came from an oriental painting. That was the first impression Suho felt on the way to the black market. A deep valley road covered in misty mountains. As he walked up the winding road, a huge building in front of Suho slowly revealed its outline and eventually revealed its true nature.

*'A temple'*

It was as such. There was no other way to express it. Soaring ceilings, a rough but elaborately decorated stone pillar, a huge door made of bronze in the middle of it. This sacred atmosphere, which is overwhelming as soon as you see it, made him instinctively aware that this place is a 'temple' even if I don't know who it is for.

***Wince***.\*

Suddenly, Beru's eyes shone sharply as he looked ahead.

[Small liege, I can feel a lot of people in the depths of that building.]

"Human? Or a demon?"

***Flick***.\*

To Suho's question, Beru flicked his antennae and answered confidently.

[People with magical powers. Probably most of them are hunters.]

"What about the demons?"

[I can feel the demons too, but not many, and there is no one right across the door.]

"It is as the branch manager said." Suho nodded and walked carefully in front of the temple. Then he raised his head and looked up at the huge door that was firmly closed in front of him. A heavy door that ordinary people will never be able to open. Of course, if it was Suho's absurd strength stat, he could have smashed it in one hit rather than simply opening it.

*'But if that's the case, it would be pointless to hide.'* It wasn't a good way to cause a fuss at all in a situation where his grandfather might or might not be in this building. Besides, Suho already knew how to open this door.

**Snap.**

Suho took out the 'Stardust necklace' he had stolen from branch manager Min Dae-Seok from his pocket and held it up. Then, after putting the necklace around his neck, he reached out his hand and gently pushed the closed door.

**Creeaakk.**

Then, to his surprise, the heavy door began to slide so lightly.

### **Swing!**

Eventually, the door opened wide, revealing a spacious interior. A shady interior with moss on the floor, walls, and ceiling. Suho followed the torches hanging on the wall and stepped into the hallway, bursting into laughter.

“So it worked. I never thought that the real purpose of the Stardust necklace was actually a pass for the black market.”

Nowadays, the reason why Stardust necklaces were made is widely known as a memorial meaning. The so-called *'Let's honor the souls of the victims who died as ingredients for Stardust'* was a really meaningful and good intention. In addition, since most of the proceeds from Stardust necklaces are actually used for the bereaved family, no one doubted the purpose.

*'But in fact, it was all a smoke screen.'* According to branch manager Min Dae-Seok, there are still only a handful of hunters who know this truth. In the first place, since it wasn't long since the black market was created, few people knew about its existence. But it was only a matter of time after all.

[Even if information about the black market is distributed to only a few people, they will spread word of mouth on their own in the future.]

When the information about the black market gradually became known, then the hunters would move to get their hands on the Stardust necklace. Quay showed interest. Really, the more you know about the black market, the more interesting it can be.

[It's like a multi-level pyramid scheme.]

Ponzi schemes, commonly referred to as pyramid schemes, used to increase victims this way. A method of starting with a small number at first, and increasing the number by enticing others as if introducing good things. Among them, there were many places with a strong religious intention to the point of being suspicious at times. However, as long as there was no direct damage to himself, it really didn't matter to Suho. But what if that religion is the Foreign Religion that serves the Itarim?

*'Anyways, one thing is clear.'* If this was a real temple of Foreign Religion, it seemed that the Apostles of Itarim had already perfectly adapted to Earth. After walking along the hallway for a while, a wide dome-shaped space opened up in front of Suho. It seemed as big as an Olympic stadium, or even bigger than several of them put together. However, Suho, who witnessed the scene unfolding inside, couldn't help but be a little surprised. I thought it was a black market, so I thought it would be very dark and secretive, but when I came in, it was much brighter and more upbeat than I thought.

“Only 200 stones! ¡Negotiations are available!”

“All types of dungeon ores are available here except for the rare ones!”

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“Drop a demon corpse today! Only the last person on a first-come, first-served basis will be given a discount!”

“Super Sale! Super sale!”

"If you don't have money, you can pay with magic stones!"

"Ah-oh! Are you new here? What idiot in the world would hold out a credit card on the black market?!"

Suho felt like he was at a fairground. Numerous mats and booths filled the wide space. Numerous merchants set up their seats there, eagerly soliciting customers, buying and selling goods. Watching the scene, Suho couldn't help but burst out laughing. “It looks like I came to some kind of bazaar.” It was said that it was a black market created for tax evasion, but when he saw it, he felt like he was in a second-hand market. However, there were also unexpected appearances.

[My small liege, there seems to be a smithy that smelts ore and sells weapons.]

"I know. Blacksmiths seem to be mainly demons." Surprisingly, humans and demons lived in harmony in this place. Hunters were the main traders who briefly visited and traded goods, but those who set up here and made and sold goods in earnest were demons wearing crow masks. In other words, they were the organizers.

*'A market where humans and demons coexist. It's really bizarre.'*

[Master, you can see the auction house and gambling hall over there.]

*'hmm?'*

Looking at the direction Quay was pointing, he finally started to see something that resembled a black market.

“Ha, one more time! lend me some more money please! I can pay it back!” Hunters who seemed to have wasted all their fortunes in front of the gambling house were begging with bitter expressions. When they finally raised their mana from their whole bodies, the crow masked demons guarding the gambling hall grabbed their shoulders.

“Dear customers, calm down. You shouldn't be like this here.”

“We also don't want to walk out of here either!”

“Yeah, just once! Please lend me just this once!”

"...Whoo. There's nothing we can do. Then why don't you play a few rounds yourself?" "Wait what?"

"Don't worry. I'll take responsibility and match you to your weight class."



The gamblers' eyes were shaken by the demon's suggestion. In the meantime, the hunter in debt couldn't keep his eyes off the gambling house because he held some lingering feelings before ending up making a decision that he shouldn't have made.

"...You're really going to match the weight class, aren't you?"

"Oh, of course. You know it well, don't you? Underground fighting is a pure bare-bodied fight, taking off all the items from the participants. What should a strong hunter like you be worried about?"

"...Then, can I get a deposit in advance?" The moment those words came out, Suho looked at them. The corners of the mouths of demons tearing beyond the crow mask. The demons smiled brightly and held the hands of the gamblers, no, hunters.

"What an obvious thing to say. Then, let's talk about the actual contract over there." Suho quietly watched the backs of the gamblers following the demons one after another.

*'An underground arena. They literally made a deal with the devil.'*

[My young liege, you know that gambling is a shortcut to bankruptcy, right? Why are you going there?]

"It's an underground arena. The view is fine."

As Suho walked to the gambling den, the gatekeeper demons who were guarding the gates bowed respectfully to Suho and started talking to him.

"I don't think I've seen you before. Are you, by any chance, visiting from another factory?"

At the same time, he raised his gaze and looked at the pair of horns hanging above Suho's head, feeling a little wary.

[Just answer in half words. Since you have Vulcan's horns, they think you're a much higher demon, so be careful.]

At Esil's timely advice, Suho nodded briefly and opened his mouth. "I heard some rumors and stopped by for a while. Any problems?" At the same time, when he gently lifted the Stardust necklace hanging around his neck and showed it, the gatekeeper demons hurriedly backed away and responded quite favorably.

"Oh, it's no problem. Our new factory is always welcome. If you need any guidance, could we be of help?"

*'It's strange.'*

Suho got the feeling of a salesperson who wanted to break through a new account from the demons. And the demons seemed to have no intention of hiding their innermost thoughts.

"Although... If you don't mind, may I know how much Stardust you have?" At the same time as that question, their snake-like eyes scanned the appearance of Suho, who came here

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empty-handed. "As you know, there are so many factories that have become broken these days."

"..." While Suho chose his words for a moment, Esil whispered in displeasure.

[What the— How dare such insignificant demons talk like this to a horned demon?!]

*'Why are you angry? I'm not even a real demon.'*

It seemed that this was a place where people could come regardless of the ranks of the demons. However, when Suho was silent for a while, an outright sneer appeared on the gatekeepers' lips.

"Ah I knew this would happen."

"So did I."

He recognized it from the moment he came empty-handed. These days, there are so many demons who come to us because they want to join us.

"Hmm?" It was then. A bunch of Stardust suddenly appeared in Suho's hand, who had been thought to be empty.

"...!"

At that moment, the gatekeepers' eyes widened. No, it wasn't just a bag, then came two, three, four.

In the meantime, while robbing Demon Factories, Suho kept the Stardust he had acquired there in his inventory. A fishy smile appeared on Suho's lips as he took out a package full of them and showed it to the demons.

"Do you need more?"

"Ah no, that's enough."

"Please come this way. We will escort you to the VIP room!"

"Let me guide you."

"Yep!" The gatekeeper demons immediately humbled themselves and guided Suho to the gambling hall. Suho followed them, his eyes shining sharply.

*'A VIP room... Demons really live like real people here.'* It was certainly a good thing he pretended to be a demon from the start. In order to find out if his grandpa is here, it would be quicker to investigate from the depths.

# 185

Suho was guided by the demons and entered the black market gambling area.

As he heard from the outside, the gambling that was being done here wasn't the same kind as hanafuda or poker.

“Ah!”

"Die! die!"

Instead, it was a vast underground arena where blood and sweat vibrated. There, two hunters who took off all their equipment were fighting a desperate battle. Looking at the venom in the eyes and the expression of evil, it was clear to everyone what kind of situation this was.

“Hehe. Doesn't it look really fun? They are all human beings who jumped in to pay off their gambling debts.” While the gatekeeper who was guiding Suho kept laughing, Esil's cynical voice was heard.

[How pitiful for all these lower demons to...]

Now that all demon nobles with absolute status have disappeared, the lesser demons living scattered here and there seemed to be eager to imitate the former. *'By the way, the guys in the demon realm last time made the **demons** fight each other, but here, **humans** fight each other and also watch themselves.'* In an instant, a cool light passed through Suho's eyes.

Suho was also well aware of the Colosseum duel, the culture of demon nobles. hasn't he fought as a gladiator before? But somehow it turned out to be the opposite this time.

After a while, Suho arrived at a place that looked like a terrace with the best view of the underground fighting arena.

“This is the VIP room. This is a space where humans are not allowed to enter, so you should be able to watch the game comfortably. If you would like to join the game, please call us anytime.”

“I will.”

Suho sat down on the soft sofa and looked around in a relaxed manner. In the VIP room, some demons who were watching the underground arena were sitting. They were almost identical in color, but they covered their faces with a crow mask and wore Stardust necklaces around their necks.

However, from the moment Suho entered the VIP room, their attention was focused on Suho rather than fighting underground.

“Hoo. You're someone I haven't seen.”

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“Are you a new guest?”

“The horns are really... Oh my.”

Vulcan's horns. Their attention was focused solely on the horns of Vulcan growing on Suho's head. Eyes full of curiosity. A servile look mixed with fear. Beyond fear, there were gazes full of awe. Beyond the crow masks covering their faces, complex emotions toward Suho were blatantly felt. However, no one dared to speak to Suho first.

[It's a natural reaction.]

Esil explained.

[Because the horns of Vulcan now are completely different from when you were a gladiator.]

Originally, Vulcan was a clumsy aristocrat who couldn't make Bloodstone, which is a fine meal for demon nobles. That's why he was the demon who preyed on his own people more than any noble. He had been so anxious to devour the souls of other demons even when he had been dead and only had his horns left. So, although it is invisible to the human Suho, it is visible to the eyes of the demons. This vicious and greedy demon's energy blazed from the horns of Vulcan, who had eaten his fill of the demon souls.

*'... How terrible.'*

*'How many people do I have to eat to get this kind of energy?'*

*'Could it be that he ate all the demons in his factory?'*

Even if they didn't say it directly, the thoughts that the demons in the VIP room had while looking at Suho were almost the same. It was then.

“Tsk.”

Suho suddenly clicked his tongue and woke them up.

“The spectacle is over there.”

The demons, who suddenly came to their senses at those words, turned their eyes away from Suho with embarrassing expressions. But not everyone was like that. “I'm sorry if this was rude in the first meeting. It's because everyone is quite thrilled to see you. I don't know if you know this, but this is also a place to make new friends.”

Suddenly, a demon approached Suho and spoke to him in a friendly way. It looked similar to the others, but there was one difference when he looked closer.

*'The necklace... He doesn't have one.'*

[Could he be the host of this place?]

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Suho and Esil exchanged a quick conversation. In the meantime, the demon, who had come closer, opened his mouth again with an awkward smile when Suho just looked at him without replying.

"Haha, you are quite taciturn. So let me introduce myself first. My name is 'Lotto' and I am in charge of running this casino."

[It's not a demonic name. I think it's a demon with no name in the first place, or a rough pseudonym.]

Listening to Esil's explanation, Suho pondered for a while. *'Hmm. What should I do?'* This demon named Lotto was now directly demanding his identity. The other person was also using a pseudonym anyway, so it didn't matter if they said anything about names. But then you won't find out anything this way. Wouldn't it just make time go by sluggishly if you avoid it?

"My name is," Suho finally opened his mouth. "Vulcan."

!!!

At that moment. All the demons in the VIP room widened their eyes and looked at Suho with shocked eyes.

[Su— Suho?]

Even Esil called for Suho with a clear tone of embarrassment.

"...As a pseudonym, it seems to be quite a dangerous one to use."

"A pseudonym..." Suho looked straight into Lotto's eyes with a smile as if he had heard something really interesting. Lotto's expression, which had been wearing a friendly smile the whole time, hardened. Suho laughed and asked him instead.

"Why should I use a pseudonym?"

"It is known that there are no demon nobles left in the world."

"That must be for the other demon nobles."

"So you say your name is Vulcan?" While having a short conversation with Suho, Lotto's eyes were getting colder. Similarly, the other demons were also focusing their enormous bloodlust on Suho. However, there were too many strong people that Suho had faced so far to be weighed down by such an unpleasant life. Rather, Suho took a more relaxed attitude, crossed his legs, and leaned back on the sofa.

Then, he raised one hand and reached out to the gatekeeper demon standing next to him, calling out to Esil.

*'Esil, can you make a Bloodstone?'*

[I don't know what you're thinking, but Vulcan is... Just for now.]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Esil did not know what Suho was up to, but she obediently accepted the request. After all, if it was necessary, they were strong enough to hit and fight all around the place.

**Shuaaa!!**

“Oh my?!”

Suddenly, following Suho's hand, black blood began to be forcibly extracted from the gatekeeper demon's body. All the demons who witnessed the scene had no choice but to jump up from their seats with faces full of astonishment. The demon's blood that had just been drawn from Suho's hand formed into a ball and began to turn into black Bloodstone.

“A Bloodstone?!”

“It's a Bloodstone!”

“Oh my god! A real demon aristocrat?!”

At that moment, Suho spewed his bloodlust from his entire body at just the right time.

[Use 'Skill: Bloodlust'.]

“...!”

“...!”

**Fwooom!**

When Suho's life-threatening spirit surpassed the VIP room and filled the entire casino, the demons instinctively had no choice but to lower their bodies or step back. The Bloodstone that appeared in front of them and the tremendous bloodlust that surpassed their own energy. When these two were combined, even Lotto, who confidently appeared in front of Suho, had no choice but to grow pale.

“Oh, this could be....”

“No way, is he the real Vulcan...”

“He looks different...”

“Being possessed by humans....”

*'Hmm. This reaction is good.'*

Suho and Esil had a conversation to themselves, listening to the demons' mutterings and holding breaths from all sides.

[What do you mean?]

*'What do you mean what do I mean? I'm acting like a real noble in front of those who act like nobles.'*

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[You know. Vulcan was a nobleman who couldn't make Bloodstone. They probably know it too.]

*'Yeah. That's why this is even more meaningful.'*

Suho smiled faintly and withdrew the killing spree. Then he looked at Lotto again and asked.

"How is it? Was that a little convincing?" At that question, Lotto erased the embarrassed expression on his face and tried to calmly reply to Suho's words.

"I was really surprised to see a real Bloodstone." His eyes were still on the Bloodstone in Suho's hand. He couldn't believe it even when he saw it. But, no matter how you look at it, it's not *'real'* real. So it was even more confusing.

"But...Originally, I knew that Lord Vulcan was someone who couldn't make Bloodstone."

"That's true. But once I figured it out, it wasn't that difficult."

"You figured it out?" Lotto's eyes widened at those words.

In a moment, all the eyes of all the demons here were filled with great greed. Suho's words were enough to arouse the demons' desire. What was the reason the demons developed Stardust in the first place? Wasn't it because they wanted to imitate the noble's unique power and create a Bloodstone?

Bloodstone is the proof of true nobility, proof of existence. Only by being able to create Bloodstone, demons could grow their power more efficiently and become nobles. And furthermore, only by becoming a real nobleman could he be qualified to succeed Baran, the White Flames Monarch, the Demon King who is now dead.

By the way, how *can* you make Bloodstone? 'Vulcan' had once been ignored by the same nobles because he couldn't make Bloodstone for an incredibly long time. So when did this change happen?

It no longer mattered whether Suho was the real Vulcan or not to the demons here.

"Have you taught yourself how to make Bloodstone?"

"Why? Do you want to learn?"

"!!!"

Lotto's eyes widened to the point of popping out. Now, whenever something came out of Suho's mouth, the demons' expressions were changing every moment. Seeing those reactions, Esil muttered as if she was fed up.

[You're really...]

But everyone, no, even demons, when someone tells you what you want to hear, you want to believe it, no? Lotto stuttered and asked Suho.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

"You- you can learn it?"

[No, no of course you can't learn to make them! Bloodstones are—]

"There is nothing I can not learn."

[You liar!]

Esil's words flowed into the back of his ears, and Suho held the act as much as possible as he talked to Lotto in a sincere voice. Then all of a sudden...

"But."

**Flinch!**

*'But?'*

*'But what?'*

First came caution, then shock and horror. The demons are now listening to every word Suho says. Suho continued speaking while leaning back on the sofa, enjoying the eyes of the demons that were excessively focused on him.

"Wasn't this a gambling place? If you're here to gamble, let's gamble and have fun."

"Now, wait a minute. Lord Vulcan...!"

Gambling wasn't important right now!

**Crack!**

At that moment, Suho crushed the Bloodstone he was holding with his finger.

*'Ahh!!'*

The demons looked anxiously at the sight of the Bloodstone that turned into dust and scattered from Suho's hand.



# 186

“ ... ”

“ ... ”

There was a strange atmosphere in the gambling hall of the Black Market.

In the meantime, the exciting atmosphere where humans were fighting and betting with each other was no longer there. The demons in the VIP room no longer paid attention to the game, and all their attention was focused on the sudden appearance of the demon aristocrat, 'Vulcan'.

*'oh my god. Lord Vulcan was alive.'*

*'A real demon noble.'*

*'As long as I can learn how to make Bloodstone, I'll become a demon noble.'*

Numerous eyes kept glancing at Vulcan, no, Suho. A pure desire was clearly felt. The primary and blatant emotion of pursuing that power was like gluttony to demons. However, even in such a thin cold atmosphere, Suho himself was still watching the underground fight with a relaxed look.

Like a male tiger lying down in the middle of the jungle and enjoying the sun. It looked like the dignified appearance of a true demon aristocrat. At least in the eyes of the other demons.

[Is it really okay to do this?]

¿What?'

[Do you really need to take such a risk?]

Esil had been worried for a while.

[Do not forget. The reason our family was destroyed was all because of the rebellion of the lower demons. Right now, they might just be surprised after seeing the Bloodstone, but they could soon attempt to attack you and eat you at any time.]

*'Yeah, I know. But I've been curious about something.'* Suho looked around the underground arena with a relaxed gaze and asked Esil. *'In a demon realm with such a clear hierarchy based on power, how on earth were the lower demons able to exterminate your family?'*

[That's because we were outnumbered.]

*'Are you sure? Is that really the only reason?'*

[...What are you trying to say?]

Esil was a little furious. What Suho was saying now sounded like he was blaming the Radir family for being weak to the point where they could be eaten by such low-level demons. However, Suho's words were not over yet.

*'I've become quite strong compared to before, haven't I? That's why I realized that...' As Suho's gaze swept over the demons around him, the demons caught in his gaze flinched. '...No matter how many times these guys try, it doesn't seem like I'll ever lose.'* Suho's eyes grew cold, like a lion looking at a pasture with hundreds of sheep.

[What do you mean? Is this about the Itarim? Are you saying that they must have been behind the rebellions of the lower demons?]

*'Doesn't that make more sense than saying that the lower demons simply ate the demon nobles?'*

Suho was almost certain. It was already like that during the Blood-eyed Tyrant Demon, and demons were the perfect race to become Itarim's slaves in the first place. Besides, their souls were made from uncontaminated mana, so the power of the Shadow Monarch wouldn't work on them. From the standpoint of the Itarim, where else could there be a better race to deal with the Shadow Legion?

[...Its possible.]

At Suho's persuasive words, Esil could only nod. *'Well, then.'* Suho smiled meaningfully and opened the inventory. *'From now on, let's take everything from these guys.'*

## **Ding!**

"I bet on that man." Lotto, who suddenly received a package of Stardust from Suho, couldn't help but be flustered by its heaviness.

"Lord Vulcan, are you sure you want to spend this much in one game?"

"I can't?"

"It's not a problem in terms of regulations, but if the stakes are high, other guests will have to agree..."

At Lotto's words, Suho's gaze slid over the other demons. Then, without saying anything, the demons scrambled to nod.

"Yes, I agree."

"Hmm. Oh this? Yes, it's not a big deal."

As expected of demons with strict hierarchical order, from the moment they saw Suho using the Bloodstone, honorific words automatically came out of their mouths. Seeing that, Lotto smiled bitterly.

*'This... is not good.'*

After all the nobility disappeared, the demon realm became a truly egalitarian society. Of course, that look was a little far from the democracy that humans talk about. A fair world where anyone can eat each other equally and be eaten. The weak are bitten and eaten, and the strong, if they find a loophole, bite their necks and suck their blood. In this endless hell-like disorder, demons were scrambling to do anything to create a new order for themselves.

One of the representative orders was here, the black market.

*'...But all of a sudden, a demon aristocrat whom I thought was extinct appeared?'*

Now, just when a new order was about to be established, the old order suddenly returned. They couldn't help it. They had already seen him make Bloodstone right in front of their eyes. And since he's given room to teach everyone here how to make Bloodstone...

'Psychologically and realistically, it has become an absolute relationship between superior and inferior.'

In this way, a proper gambling could not be made, and the alarm Lotto felt had immediately become a reality.

"...Well then, I will also bet on the human that Lord Vulcan bets on."

"Just by the looks of it, that human seems stronger."

"So will I..."

The demons rushed to the same side as Vulcan and started betting. Not one demon wanted to stand on the other side of Vulcan. Eventually, the bet was lost. Lotto sighed, rubbing his throbbing forehead.

"Guests, we can't start the game if everyone bets on the same side." But these words did not work at all.

"Still, even in my judgment, that human will win, so what can I do?"

"Nothing."

"Besides, I can't doubt Lord Vulcan's keen eye."

"..." Looking at the demons shrugging their shoulders with shameless expressions, as if asking what was wrong, Lotto gnashed his teeth inwardly. It was then...

"Tsk. This is no fun." Suho, who was leisurely watching the scene from behind, suddenly clicked his tongue briefly. Then, with a faint smile on his lips, he murmured softly. "Hmm. Could this make it more fun?" A shocking declaration suddenly jumped out of his mouth.

"I will teach the Bloodstone recipe to the guy who picks up the most Stardust against me here."

...?!

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

At that moment, the stiff eyes of the demons were frozen in astonishment. Suddenly a tremendous desire began to boil.

“Bah, are you serious about what you just said?!”

“No, I don’t doubt Lord Vulcan’s words but...!”

“Wait a minute! guests! Please calm down!”

Lotto tried his best to calm the heat of the demons, but the atmosphere was already chaotic. However, Vulcan's proposal was so enchanting that even Lotto himself was greedy.

"This is going to be fun now." Pleased with the hated atmosphere, Suho opened his inventory.

**Ding ding ding!**

“...!”

“...?!”

Huge stakes. Suho, who had piled up Stardust pouches on the table, said with a meaningful smile. "Then let's start the game."

**¡Wooooo!**

Thus began the gamble of a lifetime for the demons.

\*\*\*

What does it take to win at gambling here? Great luck? Huge stakes? Or, a great eye?

*'None.'*

In fact, the demons were confident of defeating Vulcan in this underground arena because this wasn't just a place to fight and watch humans. After all, they are just VIPs here. The real guests here, no, the watchers were human guests.

Whoaaaaaaa-!

The spectator seats are wrapped around the bottom of the VIP room. Hunters using the black market gathered there and betted money on the outcome. The odds of winning are practically 5 to 5. A very simple bet where one party wins or loses. But that was only a superficial win rate.

What kind of place is a gambling den then? A place that grants you an illusion where you can win money, but then makes you fall into a greater debt, making it impossible to escape. That is the mechanism of the gambling house.

*'It's a game where the winnings can be manipulated.'* The moment he heard Vulcan's declaration of shock, Lotto struggled to hold back the blatant ridicule that rose to his lips and secretly gave instructions to the attendants in the underground arena.

*"Use the rabid-blood poison."*

**Nod.**

Seeing the nodding demon attendants, Lotto smiled meaningfully without Vulcan's knowledge. It was for this reason that they dug the floor of the gambling den to create an underground fighting arena. There was quite a distance between the VIP room and the underground arena, so it was only a matter of deceiving the eyes of demons and playing tricks on opponents.

*'No matter how dominant the demon nobles are, they can't notice the rabid-blood poison from this distance.'*

After instructing the attendants to manipulate the game appropriately without being seen, Lotto approached and sat next to Vulcan with a friendly smile. Seeing that, Vulcan looked at him as if he was having fun.

"Are you sure you want to participate in gambling yourself?"

"Of course. An event such as this rarely happens, but to be honest, what demon isn't greedy for a plate of Bloodstone? Oh, don't worry too much. No matter how much I am the host of this place, the people who participate in the underground fighting arena change every time."

"Are you saying there is no way to manipulate the match?"

"That's right." Lotto smiled at Suho's words and added his own stake on the table. He tried to stay calm, but his eyes were already burning with ambition.

"I will learn how to make Bloodstone."

"Well, it's good to be honest." On the other hand, Suho smiled and muttered as he cast his gaze back to the underground arena.

"Yes, this will certainly be fun."

It was then...

[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, smells the rabid-blood poison and licks her lips.]

*'As expected, he used the rabid-blood poison.'* Suho smiled and muttered to himself at the just-in-time message from Queresha.

'Queresha, detoxify it.'

She did so.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[Debuff: Rabid-blood poison' has been detoxified.]

The debuff disappeared from the hunter who was poisoned with rabid-blood poison by the demon servants.

*'Beru.'*

[Did you call for me?]

*'Use your skill as well.'*

[Kihehe.]

At Suho's words, Beru's meaningful eyes lit up as he secretly went down to the underground arena. Beru hid in the shadow of the hunter Suho had bet on.

Quite coincidentally, this hunter was that same hunter with the Beast Mode skill, who had become broke earlier.

[Beru uses 'Skill: Harsh Command'.]

['Skill: Harsh Command' increases the target's stats by 50%.]

[As a side effect of 'Skill: Harsh Command', the target is cursed with madness.]

“...GRRR.”

Gradually, the hunter's eyes turned red.

# 187

There was no one who could stop the Plague Monarch, the Queen of Insects: Queresha, whose protection she had given to Suho.

[Quay uses 'Debuff: Paralysis Poison'.]

[Quay uses 'Debuff: Sleep Poison'.]

[Quay... ... .]

When Suho made up his mind and started manipulating the match, the match in the underground arena started to flow very biasedly.

“Wait, what!”

“Why is that human suddenly limping?!”

“Hmm. He must have sprained his ankle somewhere. After all, humans are weak.”

“¡Ah! Why did that human suddenly lose his eye? He was fighting so well!”

“Hmm. He must have had a hard time sleeping last night. After all, humans are weak.”

“...?”

“...?”

“Huh. Is this my victory again?”

**Swoop.**

Suho pulled all the stakes gathered on the table to himself with a really shameless, no, solemn expression. Looking at the Stardust pouches gradually piling up in front of Suho... “Oh, it can’t be.” The demons who lost the bet had no choice but to look devastated. In this atmosphere, Suho calmly looked at the situation and had a conversation with Esil.

[...Surprisingly, they don't make them fight to the death unlike in the Colosseum. Even a healer is prepared.]

*'Of course. If people die here, rumors will spread that hunters keep disappearing in Yangpyeong. Even the black market wouldn't want that.'*

[Then what is the real purpose of these guys? Unless they are using the corpses of hunters who died here as ingredients for Stardust...]

*'Isn't that what we are trying to find out?'*

All the demons here were low-level demons who were much weaker than Suho. Still, there was a reason why Suho didn't kill them right away and took such a cumbersome method.

*'Even if I kill a demon, I can't extract their soul.'* Against the demons, he couldn't try to talk to their shadow after killing them like in the case of Quay or Harmakhan. So, he had to create an atmosphere where they could freely share information by their own will while keeping them alive as much as possible.

And one more thing here. While the attention of the demons in the black market was increasingly focused on the gambling hall, Beru had been diligently looking around for Sung Il-Hwan.

Although he would sometimes...

"Uh? Where did the magic stone that was here go?"

"Ah, there's a thief!" – By avoiding people's eyes, he would sometimes steal and eat the magic stones that were on the stalls one by one.

*'Oh, am I gonna get a reaction?'* Just as Suho said, Lotto, who was watching the situation, chewed his lips with a complicated expression.

*\*'How could this happen...'* He couldn't help but be perplexed. Originally, all the hunters who participated in the underground arena fought each other without equipment, and with similar grades and physiques. That's why this game was more fierce than usual, and the game was overturned even by a moment's carelessness or poor physical condition.

But for all the competitors to have such weakened conditions... Isn't this more than coincidental?

*'How is it that each of the guys who Lord Vulcan betted against were in such bad shape?'* Could this be the keen eye of a real demonic aristocrat? *'No.'* This was more than a little—no— this was very suspicious.

"How about you choose a hunter first?"

"..."

"..."

Yes. Vulcan had never chosen his opponent first. Unconditionally, only after all the demons had staked their bets on both sides, did he make the last bet. That's only a reverse bet with a high dividend because the bet is small. It was very shameless, as if he already knew the outcome of this game.

As a result, in front of Suho, there were more than three times as many bags of Stardust piled up than when he first entered this place.

Lotto gnashed his teeth. *'It's clear that you're cheating here... So what is your intention?'* From a while ago, Vulcan had been playing tricks very proudly. Honestly, If you rather cheat at least have some losses too so you can keep up the facade! But the problem is...



There was no evidence to incriminate his cheating. In fact, his side was also the one who was cheating as well. However, even though the organizers were determined and kept fixing the match while using the rabid-blood poison, the winner was always the human chosen by Vulcan.

*'In addition, people who were poisoned with the rabid-blood poison are already detoxified. I haven't heard any rumors that Vulcan has this ability.'*

At this point, he had no choice but to admit it. In the first place, Vulcan had no reason for him to play around with them like this, he could tear them apart and eat them whenever he wanted. Which is what made his intentions even more suspicious.

*'No way... Did you come here after already knowing everything?' Lotto's eyes that were set on Vulcan gradually narrowed.*

It was a widely known rumor in the demon world that Vulcan was originally an insignificant creature who could not speak. Then, after accidentally picking up a branch from the World Tree and eating it, he suddenly became the ruler of a region and became a demon noble.

That was Vulcan.

However, a half-demon noble who was thought to have died in that war suddenly appeared with the ability to make Bloodstone, and he could even speak?

*'...It's not just about having language skills. His intelligence has also improved.'*

This demon with such complex thoughts came to this place without hesitation and in an instant led the atmosphere of the gambling hall to his own will.

*'Could it be that Vulcan is still evolving?'*

*'Did he barely survive the war because of the protection of the World Tree?'*

*'The World Tree that gave birth to the rulers would do it...'*

A lot of thoughts were floating around in Lotto's head. At the end of it, Lotto eventually decided to step back.

"Hah. I understand, Lord Vulcan."

"... Hmm?" When Roto suddenly spoke to him, Suho, who was excitedly sweeping up the Stardust, turned to him.

"If you want Bloodstone, you're saying that we should start sharing all the cards we have."

"..." At that, Suho stared at him without a word.

Lotto smiled bitterly as he looked at the Stardust piled up like a mountain in front of Suho. "If you had that thought, you could have told me from the beginning, before trying to play such mischievous pranks on me."

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“ ... ”

“A Star Piece. Did you come here because you wanted that from the beginning?”

*'¿A Star Piece?'*

[Star Piece?]

For a moment, a question mark appeared in Suho's mind, but he never showed it. Then Lotto suddenly tore off his jacket and showed Suho the blue jewel implanted in the middle of his chest.

"That's right. As Vulcan predicted, our real trade is these Star Pieces. It is on a different level than the unfinished Stardust."

[So what is a Star Piece?]

*'I don't think they'll show it off so arrogantly if it was made by simply hardening the Stardust.'*

Answering Esil, Suho kept his expression as nonchalant as possible. Finally, useful information began to emerge. Well, from now on the real deal appeared. Suho opened his mouth in a low voice.

“The Star Piece... Could it be a substitute for a Bloodstone.”

“Hoho. Could it be now? I guess you must be curious about the performance of the Star Piece if you said such a thing.” Lotto stroked the star fragment transplanted to his chest with an infinitely proud expression. “If you thought our Stardust necklaces spread among humans was the real deal then you are very mistaken. Things like that are just by-products thrown away in the process of refining Star Pieces. Although they are useful in their own way.”

*'They are useful? Are you saying there are other functions besides them being a black market pass?'* Although he was sticking to his laid-back attitude, Suho's head was spinning with many thoughts.

“Of course, we first started researching ways to simply imitate Bloodstone. But then we demons began to grow curious as to what kind of synergy will occur when the god of the outer universe dwells in the blood of a demon.”

The magic of a deity from an outer universe. That was the Blue Mist flowing from the gate. The Blue Mist is magic sent from outer space to melt the dimensional walls. In other words, it was the power of the Itarim.

“Well, that sounds interesting.” Suho leaned back leisurely again and pointed at the Stardust piled up in front of him with his chin. “Then I'll trade all of these in exchange for a Star Piece.”

Hhaha. That seems a bit difficult. No matter how much Stardust you trade, it cannot be compared to the value of a Star Piece. In the first place, the trading units are different.”

[Eh, Does he want a transaction?]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Hearing those words, Esil's angry voice came to Suho. Considering this was the attitude of a nobleman, Suho decided to follow Esil's heart.

“... You want a deal. That's quite a funny word.” The moment Suho smiled—

[Use 'Skill: Bloodlust.]

**Fwoom!**

“...Agh, how can it be so powerful?!” Lotto had no choice but to step back with a pale complexion due to the tremendous amount of bloodlust emanating from Suho's entire body. The other demons were also frightened and hurriedly lowered their stance. Another demon had also accidentally fallen flat on the floor and bowed to Suho.

“...Even in this world, there are some things that will never change.” Suho slowly got up. Then, with the most nonchalant expression on his face, he slowly approached Lotto. “Nobles don't make any deals. We just give orders.”

“ ... ”

**\*Rub, rub\***

Even as Suho touched the Star Piece implanted in Lotto's chest with his hand, he was oppressed by the bloodlust and could not move. It seemed as if he would tear off the Star Piece from his body with his violent hands and chew it up.

But Suho didn't.

If this guy dies, there will be no way for him to find more information.

Suho raised his hand and said. “The reason I am responding to the play you made is just for entertainment. If I was truly hungry...”

**Growl~**

Just in time, all the demons in the gambling hall were startled by the sound that echoed from Suho's stomach.

*'This is a big deal!'*

*'Vulcan is hungry!'*

*'I'm going to get eaten... ... !'*

The greedy demon Vulcan's eating habits were a tremendous fear to the lower level demons. However, Suho...

*'Hmm, come to think of it, I was so busy today that I might have skipped a meal. This wasn't what I intended.'* In the midst of Vulcan's method acting, Suho felt a bit embarrassed. But that's how it happened.

**\*Lick\***

It was Suho who licked his mouth.

“...!!” At that moment, Lotto had to fight the survival instinct of wanting to run away from here right away since he was still the manager of the gambling house.

*'¡No! If Lord Vulcan wanted to eat me, I'd be dead by now! I'm sure he came here because he wanted something...'*

**Gulp.**

*'There has to be...'* Another mouth-watering Vulcan. *'Does he want to... eat it?'* Vulcan, the demon of greed, is a guy who immediately tries to put everything in his mouth as soon as he sees it, no?

“Ah, I see!”

Lotto finally closed his eyes and shouted. As if the Star Piece planted in his chest was his lifeline, he eagerly grabbed it. “Then, how about a duel between the great warriors that have a Star Piece? It will surely be good entertainment!”

“A great warrior duel?”

At those words, Suho's bloodlust instantly disappeared.

“Yes. There are hunters who have been implanted with Star Pieces for experiments! Choose one of them, Lord Vol—.”

“Did you mean that even where humans experimented with the usage of Star Pieces?!”

“!!!” At that moment, Suho's angry hand grabbed Lotto's neck. Lotto screamed in surprise as if he had been struck by lightning.

“Ah, most of them are just a waste, but we still gave them one for the study of the Star Pieces! Even the Foreign Religion missionaries agreed!”

Suho rose.

*'I found it, these bastards.'* At that moment, Suho's eyes flashed.

# 188

"They are from a Foreign Religion!!"

Hearing Lotto's cry, Suho's expression quickly cooled. He had all sorts of thoughts going through his head right now, but he had to stay as calm as possible. "How interesting."

**Shook.**

When Suho let go of his hand, Lotto's body collapsed to the floor as if he was crumbling. "Ugh!" Lotto hurriedly confirmed that his neck was still attached and looked at Suho with a servile expression. Suho looked down at him with a lofty gaze and thought that the demons here naturally misunderstood that 'Vulcan' already knew everything. So what to do in this situation? He only had to reduce the number of words as much as possible, and only repeat what these guys say like a parrot.

"Foreign Religion... So you made a deal with them?"

"Yes, yes! Upon cooperating with us, they will be able to increase their followers on Earth!"

"Increase followers... So, is that the only result?"

Suho's gaze scanned the messed up gambling hall. Then, the manager of this place, Lotto, replied with a slightly flustered expression.

"Not just that! The black market isn't just here! Even now, in cooperation with Foreign Religion, we have started to spread Stardust all over the world using various methods!"

"This cooperation..." Suho smiled at the corner of his mouth and provoked him. "It seems to me that you guys have become their slaves instead."

"¡No!" Could this be a trigger? Lotto shouted in a fit, forgetting that he had just been begging for his life a moment ago. "We were the first to develop Stardust and we were the ones who succeeded in manufacturing the Star Pieces! Rather, they are being used by *us* demons!"

"Do you really think so?"

"Yes, yes."

"Hmm." It was only now that a satisfied expression appeared on Suho's lips. Suho's heart was sincere as he looked at Lotto with admirable eyes. How could he not admire him?

*'After all, I learned quite a lot thanks to this guy.'*

[You're kinda... cool?<sup>(1)</sup>]

*'Where did you learn that word?'*

[On the Internet.]

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Esil's voice was genuinely admiring. Isn't this enough to make us believe that Suho is not actually a human being, but a real demon aristocrat?

[Tell me honestly. Are you actually Vulcan?]

*'So noisy. This is just getting serious.'* Suho skipped over Esil's words and raised Lotto's body back up with Ruler's Authority. Then, Lotto realized that he had just fought against the Demon Noble, and became contemplative.

"If what you say is true," Suho commanded him solemnly. "Then guide me to them. Now."

"!!"

"I will meet the Foreign Religion missionaries myself." Lotto closed his eyes tightly as if he had expected him to say that. However, at the same time, elaborate calculations were running in his head. *'No, maybe this is for the better. Slowly they were getting out of control. From the beginning, Vulcan must have known everything and came to us.'*

He finally answered. "I will guide you right away. To the temple of the Foreign Religion—"

"There is no need for that,"

!!!

Then, all the sudden, a series of people entered the gambling hall, emitting tremendous power.

"Because we are already here."

\* \* \*

[Hunter Association]

-Yangpyeong Branch

"... Is it true?" Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok, who ran after receiving a call from Suho, was shocked to learn all about what had happened at the Yangpyeong branch.

**Buzzzzzzzzzzzz!**

Numerous bees flew around the Yangpyeong branch as if besieging them. Arsha's alter ego, a woman with an alluring smile, was touching her lower lip with her fingertips, acting all cute. She smiled and nodded at team leader Han Jae-Hyeok's words.

[Yes. It's all true. Right, everyone?]

**¡Eeek!**

When Arsha looked back, the Yangpyeong branch staff who were sitting there shivered at the same time.

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**Buzzzzzzzzzzzz!**

Bees hovered around them like piranhas. These countless bees, each of which felt ominous magic, were ready to attack them and sting all their blood vessels at any moment if the woman so much as flicked her hand.

*'What, what kind of skill is this...'*

*'Where did this woman suddenly come from?'*

Because of Arsha's skill(?) that Suho had called for while leaving for the black market, the employees of the Yangpyeong branch had been imprisoned in the Yangpyeong branch office. They had stayed like this until the Association Surveillance Division arrived to arrest them. This was due to Suho's judgment that some of them might be in contact with the black market.

[Branch manager, all of what I said is true, right?]

"Oh, that's right! All right!" Branch manager Min Dae-Seok nodded in succession with a pale face at Arsha's kind urging. Seeing this, team leader Han Jae-Hyeok opened his mouth to let out a sigh while holding his throbbing forehead.

"...Arrest them."

"Yes!" At his words, the surveillance and hunters who came with him arrested all the employees of the Yangpyeong branch. *'Just how did this all happen?'* Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok, who heard the whole story, was really dumbfounded.

An Association that hides the black market. *'The Association is running well, really. How long has it been since the President of the Association was away...'*

In fact, it was likely that any organization with a large number of people would fester from within and cause corruption. However, the Hunter Association was only two years old. It's really unbelievable that something like this is already happening. It was almost suspected that someone had intentionally infiltrated the Association.

"No way... Who would have thought that the Stardust necklace was made for the purpose of acting as a black market pass." Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok sighed and lowered his gaze. Right away, he grabbed the Stardust necklace hanging from his neck with his hands to tear it off. The Stardust necklace, which started as a memorial for the victims of Stardust, was actually quite a driving force on the side of the Hunter Association.

Of course, it wasn't like an organized event by the Association, but literally, *'No one said anything about it at first'*, they started to wear one by one around their necks... However,

**Stop.**

Why?

“...” His hand, which was about to take off the Stardust necklace, suddenly stopped. New thoughts came to his mind at the same time.

*'...Hmm. I bought it with money anyway, so why don't I just hold on to it a bit longer? I might need it to sneak into the black market later anyway.'*

[Huh. Why did you hesitate? Could it be that you suddenly don't want to throw away that necklace?]

“...!” Startle. At that moment, team leader Han Jae-Hyeok raised his eyes wide and raised his head forward at the alluring voice that pierced his ears. Then, right in front of him, Arsha was looking at him with a strange smile. She whispered to him as if she had just seen through his thoughts.

[Have you ever thought about it? If it's just for the purpose of commemoration, you can just buy a necklace and leave it at home, but why does everyone bother to wear it around their necks?]

While saying that, Arsha touched the Stardust necklace that team leader Han Jae-Hyeok was wearing with her soft hands.

**Crack!**

As the chain of the necklace was forcibly ripped off by that touch, a momentary light of regret passed through team leader Han Jae-Hyeok's eyes.

[Did you think it's a waste to throw it away?]

“Ah!” Only then did team leader Han Jae-Hyeok come to his senses, and his eyes widened. Then, Arsha wrinkled her nose with a mischievous expression, gently shook the necklace in front of her and said.

[Be on alert. If this necklace comes to the hands of ordinary people, won't they become possessed?]

Even while talking with Arsha, team leader Han Jae-Hyeok had a blank expression. His spine was cold. Looking back at the emotions he had just momentarily felt, they were all so strange.

*'...I wanted to take it back. I didn't want to lose the necklace.'*

[Hmm. Don't worry too much though. From what Suho found out, the effect of the Stardust Necklace disappears quickly if you keep it away from your body.]

Arsha's alter body is the one present right now. The true body of Arsha was in the shadow of Suho, who was still imitating Vulcan in the black market. Thanks to that, Arsha was able to convey the information Suho found out to team leader Han Jae-Hyeok.

[The Stardust necklace seems to be a by-product of the process of making Star Pieces. However, no matter how weak it is, if it falls into the hands of ordinary humans, it is said that



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strangely, they want to keep it by their side and develop some vague faith. Itarim, a foreign deity, is literally a 'god'.]

So, people who come into direct contact with the power of the gods develop faith in the unknown god. "...Wait a moment. A foreign deity?"

At that time, there was a certain memory that suddenly popped into team leader Han Jae-Hyeok's head. "Foreign? I'm sure I've heard of it somewhere..."

[The Foreign Religion?]

At those words, a curiosity came to Arsha's eyes as well.

[Has the team leader ever heard of the Foreign Religion?]

"Foreigners? Foreign Religion?... Ah, the Foreign Religion!"

Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok opened his eyes and looked around. Where is this place? Yangpyeong branch of the Association! He looked at the branch manager Min Dae-Seok, who was arrested by the Surveillance Division.

"I-I see!" Branch manager Min Dae-Seok was the one who had been suddenly assigned here a few months ago. The reason was that the branch manager, who was originally in charge of the Yangpyeong branch, suddenly quit the Association due to personal circumstances. The former branch manager...

He was an A-rank hunter who had been directly selected by Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the Association and assigned to take charge of the Yangpyeong branch. At the same time he had also been Han Jae-Hyeok's senior whom he greatly respected.

[...Why did the former branch manager quit?]

Hearing the words of team leader Han Jae-Hyeok, Arsha tilted her head and asked. He gritted his teeth as he recalled the memory of that time.

"I have only heard rumors, but that senior suddenly joined a pseudo-religion and disappeared..."

[Hmm?]

A person who is an A-rank hunter has fallen into a pseudo-religion? If you hear it like this, it sounds really absurd, but when the subject is about the Foreign Religion, the problem becomes quite different.

"He was always such a nice person. But all of a sudden he..."

\* \* \*

The Foreign Religion.

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With cold eyes, Suho glanced at those who entered the gambling hall. People wearing priestly clothes. All of them had blue Star Pieces on their foreheads. A middle-aged man in the middle of them stepped forward and looked at Suho with an infinitely benevolent smile.

"Welcome. Are you the demon noble named Vulcan?"

"Who are you?"

"I am a priest serving the Great Foreign Religion. But in this secular world, I go by the name of 'Kim Chul'."

[Kieek?]

At that time. Beru, who had returned from exploring the surroundings, exclaimed with a bright smile.

[Iron is back!]

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1: The translation literally was [너 쏘..... 친다?] "you are quite the... hit" and uh, it's slang, so the translation might be off from what it's intended.

# 189

After the cataclysm, it hurts to talk about the steps taken by the president of the Association, Woo Jin-Chul. He was a person that everyone in Korea respected. At the same time, he was also a person with sharply divided likes and dislikes. Looking back, his choices were always right, but the process seemed to always be reckless and bold. So, inevitably, a lot of resentment had been built behind the scenes.

Among them, there was one problem that the guilds were dissatisfied with...

It was the 'recruitment of talent'.

*'What? You said he was stolen by the president of the Association? again?!'*

*'Yes. As soon as he awakened, the Association found out who he was and offered a job proposition.'*

*'No! This Awakener hadn't even gone for a rank test! How the hell did the Association find out about the awakening!?''*

*'I know. Haha. The Association's recruiting department must have a lot of information...'*

Yes. Truly an incredible amount of information. Woo Jin-Chul, the head of the Association, used to go before anyone else and somehow attract them to the Association. His ability to act was enough reason for the guilds, who wanted to recruit talented people and increase their power, to hate him. Among them, when Woo Jin-Chul first took the S-rank hunter 'The Ultimate Soldier', there was a famous anecdote about the many guilds that hit the ground in regret upon having the S-rank be snatched away from them.

The same went for another hunter.

"... Senior 'Kim Chul' was also one of the talented people recruited directly by the president of the Association."

Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok was talking to Arsha and recalling the memories of that time. The conversation between Kim Chul and Woo Jin-Chul, who had just awakened as A-rank tanks, was a very famous anecdote.

*'What kind of Hunter do you want to be?'*

It was the question Woo Jin-Chul gave. Kim Chul said instead of answering, had asked back.

*'President, do you know what my motto is?'*

*'What is it?'*

*'To live kindly.'*

**Grin.**

Kim Chul smiled brightly at Woo Jin-Chul, saying the motto he had always had in his heart since his adolescence. Kim Chul was already in his middle age, but his smile had the innocence of an adolescent boy. Faced with a sense of good justice that was clearly felt in his eyes, Woo Jin-Chul asked again with a satisfied smile on his lips.

*'...Does that mean you want to become a good hunter?'*

*'Yes. Since I have awakened, I want to fight to protect this world with pride.'*

*'What a wonderful mindset. Come to the Association and I will entrust you with an important responsibility to protect the world.'*

*'I hope it goes well.'*

So Kim Chul held hands with Woo Jin-Chul and entered the Hunter Association without hesitation. But...

“Senior Kim Chul, who joined just like that, later said he was deeply disappointed in the Association.” Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok muttered with a bitter look. In fact, he couldn't help but *be* disappointed. Kim Chul joined the Association because he wanted to become a great hunter who protects the world.

“And the job the president of the Association had entrusted to that senior was to directly manage the Yangpyeong branch.”

[Ahh.]

It was Arsha who nodded in agreement with those words. Yangpyeong was a very quiet town for a Hunter with an aspiration to protect the world. There are even a lot of rich people living here, so bad commenters go so far as to say that the Yangpyeong branch manager is a dog that protects the rich.

“Eventually, Senior Kim Chul left the Association himself. There were many speculations that he fell into a cult of sorts, but rumors are just rumors.”

[...]

Arsha conveyed what he heard from team leader Han Jae-Hyeok to Suho.

\* \* \*

Suho, who received Arsha's words in real time, was a little surprised inside. *'The president of the Association, Woo Jin-Chul, personally selected and entrusted the Yangpyeong branch to him?'*

According to Beru, Kim Chul was a soldier named 'Iron' of the Shadow Corps led by Sung Jin-Woo a long time ago. However, as the Earth's time returned to before he died, he came

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back and led a new life. Like Hwang Dong-Soo, who was once the shadow soldier 'Greed' and now lives as an S-rank villain.

But to think that Kim Chul would become a hunter of the Association and work as the branch manager of the Yangpyeong branch where his grandfather and grandmother live. Is that really a coincidence?

*'No, it could never happen.'*

Suho realized the situation right away.

*'It was for my father.'*

Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the Association, was a person who remembered his past life related to his father. So it means that. *'He was afraid that my grandfather and grandmother would be in danger while my father was away, so the Association set out to protect Yangpyeong. Entrust the Yangpyeong branch to someone you can trust!'*

Perhaps, in the mind of Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the Association, there was no other person as trustworthy as Kim Chul, who was his father's shadow soldier in the past.

*'But maybe... He would never have thought that Kim Chul would have become a priest serving Itarim in such an absurd place.'* It seemed that even the great Woo Jin-Chul had not anticipated this variable.

"...Are you a priest of a Foreign Religion?"

"That's right."

"And if you are Kim Chul, you were once the head of the Yangpyeong branch." In response to Suho's question that hit the mark, Kim Chul nodded with a benevolent smile.

"Heh heh heh. Is there anything you don't know, Lord Vulcan? That's right. There was a time when I was involved in the Hunter Association."

"But why are you here now?"

"Hehe, that is a very sad word. Are you suspicious of me just because I've been with the Association for a while? Or, do you doubt the performance of this Star Piece?" At Suho's words, Kim Chul smiled benevolently and raised his large palm to touch the Star Piece on his forehead. Then, an auspicious blue energy slowly burned from the Star Piece, and mad eyes flashed between his fingers.

The corners of Kim Chul's mouth went up. "We, the Foreign Religion, baptize only those who have proven their faith as Star Pieces, or 'Outer God's Jewels'. There's no need to doubt it. I'm just saying that the Foreign Religions offer more to the world than the Associations..."

[Kill him now. I don't want to hear any more nonsense like that.]

Beru whispered like a demon next to Suho.

*kill him kill him kill him kill him kill him kill him—*

[You must strike down and kill that fallen soldier, Iron, and bring him back to the Shadow Legion!]

"Haha. Lord Vulcan, please calm down for a moment. As you know, there is absolutely no reason for us to antagonize each other." Kim Chul said while wiping the cold sweat on his forehead with a handkerchief, perhaps because of the energy emitted by Beru. After subduing Beru by stepping on him with his foot, Suho solemnly opened his mouth while looking at Kim Chul.

"I will ask, priest of the Foreign Religion."

No matter how much he pretended to be Vulcan, he felt like he had to ask because he was really curious about this one thing.

"Haha. So there is something even the Demon Noble doesn't know. Yes. You can ask anything."

"If you plant a Star Piece on a human, are there any side effects? Like, hair loss?"

"..."

At that moment, Kim Chul's smile, which had been benevolent all along, flinched for the first time. Kim Chul replied with a slight trembling of eyes. "This is just plain hair loss."

"Right. Come to think of it, the other humans next to you have hair attached to them. Alright then, are there any other side effects of the Star Piece?" Suho pretended to know nothing and nodded. Then, a slight wrinkle wriggled on his forehead, where Kim Chul's Star Piece was embedded before gritting his teeth and smiling.

"Please. How could there be any side effects in the first place? The Outer God's Jewel is the very grace bestowed by God for lowly human beings like us."

**Woooshh!**

With those words, the Star Piece on his forehead radiated blue energy.

"Huh."

Kim Chul inhaled the energy and made a look of ecstasy. "Hehe. Do you feel it? If the Stardust was at a level that amplified the power it possesses, then the Outer God's Jewels raises the owner's power to a higher level. In short... You will be reborn as a higher being!"

**Woooshh!**

At the same time, he could feel Kim Chul's Star Piece brimming with blue light and his energy gradually grew stronger. Undoubtedly, that energy was far beyond the magic limit of Kim Chul, who was known as an A-rank hunter.

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[Unbelievable. By accepting the godship of an outer god into its body he has started to exude an aura close to an S-rank.]

*'It's similar to the principle that I use when I merge Gray into my body.'*

At a glance, Suho could understand the principle of the Star Piece. No matter how he misunderstood that expression, Kim Chul spread his arms toward Suho with a benevolent smile, mad eyes and smiled brightly. "So, would you like to join us, Lord Vulcan? Worshiping and praising Foreign gods is the mission and destiny of mortals."

"If it is a mortal mission. Then what good is it to me?" As Suho smiled and made a small fortune, Kim Chul's eyes flashed with a meaningful expression.

"You must already know, right? The real reason Lord Vulcan, a demon aristocrat, dared to visit us! You want to become the Demon King by using the Outer God's Jewel, right?"

"...You are quite quick-witted."

"Heh heh heh. It's because I've seen many demons by my side. The lower demons say they want to become demon nobles, but if Lord Vulcan's goal is to become the Demon King, of course we could grant that!"

[Hold on, really?!]

*'Why are you like this?'*

Ignoring Esil's surprised voice, Suho scanned the surroundings with a cool gaze.

*'For now, it seems my grandfather isn't among them.'* After checking the faces of the Foreign believers, Suho asked Kim Chul, who was excitedly evangelizing here and there. "Are all the Foreign Believers here?"

"Oh no. All the other believers are offering sacrifices in the chapel."

"Guide me."

"Heh heh you showed interest in the chapel right away! My prediction was correct. Come with us to the chapel and accept the faith of the Foreign Religion!" Kim Chul never doubted Suho.

Vulcan was called the 'Demon of Greed' because he was more greedy than anyone else among the demons. Now that all the other demon nobles are gone, what he most covets must be the seat of the Demon King.

[So when do you plan to kill him?]

*'Wait. We will get everyone gathered so that no one escapes...'* Hearing Beru's whispers to continue to ambush and kill Kim Chul from the side, Suho left the gambling hall and headed for the chapel following the guidance of the Foreign believers.

Before long, a huge door appeared in front of Suho. When Kim Chul placed his palm on the huge door, his Star Piece shone and the massive door opened by itself.

**Crrreakk.**

Then, a large dome-shaped room appeared in Suho's field of vision. Inside, he could see Foreign believers lying flat on their stomachs, muttering prayers like crazy people. However, there was a reason why this incredibly large space felt cramped.

*'That's...'*

Suho's eyes flashed.

The innermost part of the chapel. There, something huge, incomprehensible to common sense, was sitting on a chair as big as the place itself. A figure of an enormous size.

"Welcome, Lord Vulcan. This is the chapel of our Foreign Religion Church." As soon as Kim Chul had finished talking:

***Tilt.***

The heads of the Foreign believers who were kneeling in prayer in the chapel all raised their heads and looked at Suho. Then they all smiled brightly with the same expression on their faces. Still, the prayers flowed incessantly from their mouths.

"Worship God. Worship God. Worship God. Worship God."

"Praise God. Praise God. Praise God. Praise God."

"Prove your faith. Prove your faith. Prove your faith. Prove your faith..."

**Slam!**

The chapel door closed with a loud roar behind Suho's back.

The last phrase of the prayer flowed from Kim Chul's mouth, who was smiling brighter than anyone else in front of the door.

"Those who do not abide by this rule will not be able to return alive."



# 190

[Rules of the Cartenon Temple]

First: Worship God.

Second: Praise God.

Third: Prove your faith.

Those who do not abide by this rule will not be able to return alive!

**T-ring!**

[Itarim's Blessing: Cartenon's Discipline' is activated.]

“Ah!!!” Suddenly, the atmosphere in the chapel changed drastically.

[Little Lord! This aura is from the Itarim!—]

[It's a trap! I think this is!—]

Even before the urgent voices of Beru and Esil, who felt the change, were over...

“Praise the Itarim!”

**¡Wooooo! ¡Woooo!**

...Along with Kim Chul's booming voice, bizarre singing voices erupted from the mouths of the Foreign believers in the chapel.

[It seems like a place where non-Foreigners are sacrificed!]

“Worship and Praise!”

“Prove your faith!”

**T-ring! T-ring! T-ring!**

System messages appeared one after another in front of Suho's eyes.

[Itarim's protection limits the magic power of unbelievers.]

**Fwoom!!**

An unknown force suppressed Suho's magical power.

[The protection of Itarim permits the use of magic to those who prove their faith.]

[The protection of Itarim grants divine power to those who prove their faith.]

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“Kill Vulcan!”

**Ahhhhhh!!**

At Kim Chul's order, all the Foreign believers focused their attacks on Suho with bright smiles on their faces.

**Punch punch punch!**

“Haha! Who would have thought that a demon noble would come to my feet!”

“No matter how demon nobles are, if their magical powers are blocked, they are nothing more than sacrifices!!!”

In that moment.

Gah!

Suho's fist suddenly swung around, and the chin of the Foreign priest who had been attacking at the front turned sideways.

**Bam!**

His body ricocheted backwards far faster than he had come, crashing into the wall.

“!!!” The eyes of the Foreign believers, including Kim Chul, widened at the same time.

[Fitness Lv.7]

There, Suho was smiling, showing his teeth in such an enthusiastic manner. “Now, since I’ve confirmed that my grandfather isn’t among them...”

**Fwoom!**

Suho clenched his fists and walked forward. He checked the faces of the believers who attacked him one by one as his eyes lit up.

“I’ll kill you all first and then ask!”

**¡Woosh!**

Suho's new model kicked off the ground and shot forward. No matter how much they tried to block his mana, some of Suho's skills did not consume magic at all. In addition, the stats from the horns of Vulcan were still engraved in his body!

[Effect 'Desire for Destruction': Increases physical damage by 300%.]

**Punch punch punch punch!**

“¡Aaaahhhh!”

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The Foreign believers scattered in all directions like autumn leaves.

When Suho started rampaging in earnest, there was nothing to block his path. Kim Chul stepped forward. “Haha! It seems we are struggling quite a bit! As expected of a demon aristocrat, the offerings are very fresh!”

**Swish.**

He radiated blue energy from the Star Piece on his forehead and swung his large shield at Suho.

**Whoosh- Bang!**

Fist and shield collided with each other. A huge shockwave spread out in all directions. Suho and Kim Chul's eyes crossed in the air.

*'This is not an ordinary A-rank level!'*

*'Is this the power of the demon nobles!?' But for a moment he thought. 'I'm going to destroy it!'*

Suho's fierce attack followed straight away like a shotgun.

**Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo!**

“Kuh!?!” Kim Chul gritted his teeth and endured all the attacks while swinging his sword with his other hand. Then, Suho immediately grabbed the horn of the Vulcan mounted on his head with both hands and swung it forward.

Kwaaaaang-!

Vulcan's two horns, which returned to sword form in an instant, cut through the air.

*'The Ruler's Authority!'* The power of a ruler which does not consume mana. Vulcan's horn shot out of Suho's hand.

**Slice slice slice slice!**

“Oh, no!” Kim Chul widened his eyes and took a step back. Every time he avoided Suho's attack, other Foreign believers were mercilessly hacked to death instead.

“Ah!” The Foreign believers caught in the attack died vomiting blood from their mouths. At that moment, an amazing thing happened.

**¡Woosh!**

The Star Piece embedded in the foreheads of the fallen Foreign believers began to radiate blue energy. The energy that spewed out like that wrapped around the bodies of the Foreign believers and soon created blue flames.

**ROAR!**

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Right after. The blue demon took control of their corpses and raised them up like puppets.

“A Mist Burn?” No, it's similar to Mist Burn, but different. The Foreign believers were only being ruled by the Star Pieces until they died.

“Ah!” The Foreign believers caught in the blue mist flew through the air and started attacking Suho.

[Little Lord! You must attack the Star Piece itself!]

Beru and Esil shouted.

[I think the Star Piece is the medium that connects Itarim and these guys!]

“So it's that kind of priestly concept?” Hearing those words, Suho's eyes lit up. “...Just like me.”

In that moment...

[The King of Beasts, the Beast Monarch, licks his lips.]

[The Queen of Bugs, the Plague Monarch raises her eyes.]

[The King of Snow Folk, the Frost Monarch is watching you.]

Even if the magical power was sealed, it had nothing to do with the souls of the monarchs who had already died and wandered the sea after death. Just as the energy of the Itarim, which exists far away in outer space, gives strength to the Foreign cultists through the medium of Star Pieces.

“Come out, Gray. Esil.”

**Whoosh!!**

*“GRRRRR!!!”*

At that moment, a huge wolf wrapped in silver suddenly jumped out of Suho's shadow and attacked the Foreign believers.

**BITE!**

Esil, which was nestled in Vulcan's horn, also jumped out and swung a spear at them.

“Wha- how— did all of a sudden?!”

When Suho's colleagues suddenly increased, Kim Chul couldn't help but be exasperated.

[Iron, welcome.]

“?!?!?!”

Suddenly, a voice whispered from Kim Chul's back. Kim Chul shuddered and hurriedly looked around, but there was nothing there.

*'A ghost?!'*

Kim Chul was startled and turned around to correct his posture. But why? *'Welcome?'* He wanted to go there, no matter where it was. *'What the hell is this feeling?!'* Confused! He was so confused! His subconscious was just delighted with that ghostly voice!

“Rise up everyone! They are few and far between! For the glory of the Itarim!” Kim Chul suppressed his unconsciousness and shouted at the believers as if talking to himself.

“For the Itarim!”

“For the Itarim!”

The followers raised their voices and the strength of their bodies.

“We may die!”

“Even if I live, it's for Itarim!”

“Even if I die, I will become an apostle of the Itarim!”

“Kill Vulcan! If you have the blood of a demon noble, you can make a lot of Star Pieces!”

The Foreign believers that were alive as well as those who had died were ruled by the Star Pieces as they joined forces to attack Suho. Despite the enormous inferiority, Suho smiled. The corner of his mouth rose and he opened his mouth.

“All of you, arise.”

I can't use magic, but what does that mean? Shadow Powers are all skills that do not consume mana. <sup>(1)</sup>

[Use 'Skill: Monarch's Domain'.]

[The stats of shadow soldiers fighting in the shadow of the caster increase by 50%.]

**WOOSH!!!**

With Suho at the center, his shadow spread out in all directions. And within it, the shadow soldiers following Suho rose up.

“Scatter and destroy the Star Pieces!”

[Yes Master!]

**Fwoom!!!**

Quay became a single spear faster than anyone else and jumped out and pierced them.

**Slice!**

**Chachachachachak!**

“Ahgk!!” As his spear pierced the Star Pieces embedded in the foreheads of the followers, they shattered into blue light dust. Along with that, the energy of the Itarim that dominated them was scattered and their bodies collapsed on the spot.

“Hey, what the hell is this!” Kim Chul, a priest of the Foreign Religion Church who was in charge of them, was greatly embarrassed and confused.

“Oh Itarim! save us! Us... Us... ?”

Incidentally: ‘... *What is this feeling?*’ Something strange happened. Terribly strange.

The shadow of Suho filled the chapel where the battle was taking place.

The skill, Monarchs’s Domain.

From the moment Kim Chul stood in his shadow. For some reason, Kim Chul was barely able to hold back his instinct from running towards Suho and kneeling down.

*‘Why, why! What the heck! Could it be that the demon noble named Vulcan brainwashed my mind?’* If true, it was a truly diabolical plot!

“Aagh! Trying to bewitch me, a priest who serves God! Do you think I will pass!”

Kim Chul gritted his teeth and charged at Suho. He concentrated his entire body on one point.

**¡BOOM!**

“Vulcan! die!”

[Iron.]

“Who are you?!” Again, at the voice of the ghost whispering behind his back, Kim Chul shouted and twisted his body to hit the back. Then, there was a real ghost there! A black shadow.

The ant-like evil spirit was smiling brightly at himself with the cruelest grin.

[Welcome.]

**Stab!**

“!!!”

That was the last thing Kim Chul saw before he died.

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[Hm? Why is this strong guy looking away instead of fighting? Must have been because I was fast.]

Quay tilted his head after having pierced the back of Kim Chul's, smashing the Star Pieces along the way. Beru giggled and looked down at Kim Chul's corpse.

[Iron must have missed the Monarch's realm for so long, Little lord! Come on, Iron, wake up!]

Suho was standing in front of Kim Chul's corpse.

[Shadow extraction may be used on this target.]

*'Didn't he say he was my father's soldier?'* Maybe that's why, even before Suho came closer, Kim Chul's shadow was shaking. He hadn't even extracted it, but it seemed like it would wake up on its own right now.

"Hmm. Arise?"

[Shadow extraction succeeded.]

**¡Woosh!**

As soon as Suho finished his words, Kim Chul's shadow surged up.

[Ha ha ha ha! I'm back!]

[Kieheek! You're finally back, Iron!]

[Ha ha ha ha! I remembered everything! All my memories are back!]

[Kiehehekekekeek!!]

As soon as he became a shadow soldier, Kim Chul and Beru laughed at each other. He suddenly turned his head to Suho. Kim Chul, who once served Sung Jin-Woo as a shadow soldier, instinctively knew what kind of relationship Suho had with Sung Jin-Woo.

[Young Lord. My new lord...]

It was then—

**Zap!**

“...!!!” Suho's sensory stat sent an ominous warning. At the same time he turned his head toward it with a frightened expression. Before he knew it, the two eyes of the huge god statue sitting on a chair in front of me were staring at him.

[Be Caref—!]

Before Iron's desperate cry was over, Suho instinctively turned his body to the side. Almost simultaneously, blue rays emanated from both eyes of the statue.

**SHING!**

The light barely passed by Suho and caused a huge explosion.

**VOOOOOOM!**

A blue ray of light swept across the area and completely melted the bodies of the Foreign believers there.

“¡Aaaaaagh!”

"¡¡Ahh!!"

In the place where the beam passed, only the remains of the Foreign believers remained. The screams came not from them, but from the mouths of other believers who witnessed their end.

“I don’t think he is a very merciful god.” Suho smirked and looked ahead. The god statue, who personally killed the believers who had prostrated themselves in front of him and prayed, smiled brightly at Suho, cruelly.

[I never thought I would see the Power of the Shadows in a place like this.]

A grotesque echoing voice flowed from the statue's mouth. The emotion felt in that voice was an obvious murderous intent towards Suho, with a distinct appetite, as if he had discovered delicious food right in front of his eyes.

[Ridiculous. Acting so arrogant about killing one priest.]

The statue of Itarim laughed at Suho and opened his mouth.

[However, there are many priests who serve me. Even those who are much stronger than that guy.]

The god statue smiled meaningfully and turned his head. Soon after...

**CRACK!**

One wall of the chapel was destroyed by the blue rays emitted from the statue of God. A Blue Mist was flowing from the hidden gate beyond.

[Come out, high priest.]

**¡Woosh!**

At those words, a silhouette slowly revealed itself from inside the gate.

[Oh! It can’t be!]

Iron, who had just become Suho's shadow soldier, suddenly recalled memories from his past life and shouted at Suho.



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[Greed! The high priest of the Foreign Religious Church is the S-rank villain Hwang Dong-Soo!]

“!!!” At those words, Suho and Beru's expressions hardened. Why did Hwang Dong-Soo appear here all of a sudden? And as the high priest of Itarim no less! If the power of the Star Pieces were added to him, who was originally an S-rank awakened, it was clear that the power would be truly enormous.

**Clomp... clomp...**

[Muahahaha!]

Together with the statue of God, Hwang Dong-Soo finally appeared at the gate.

However.

“Eh?!”

He didn't walk out on his own.

He was being dragged out by a white-haired grandfather.

-----

1: Technically speaking, summoning them does not consume mana, just regenerating them, in case anyone gets confused.

# 191

[...Huh?]

For the first time, the face of the god who had been wearing a wicked smile, shifted.

Hwang Dong-Soo: He was a high priest brainwashed by the Foreign Religion and a human with S-rank power. Contaminating the souls of those with S-rank powers was a very tricky and difficult task. To do so, they would first slowly build up friendships which he would not be wary of. Afterwards, when no suspicion stood between them, they entrusted him with the distribution of Stardust necklaces and Star Pieces, gradually becoming stained with the Itarim's divinity. After such a long time and effort, he was finally able to succeed in making him the high priest.

High Priest Hwang Dong-Soo, who possesses S-rank power, was born from such hard work.

...*But why?* Why did the high priest who he had worked so hard to make come out dragged out like that!

[How?!]

**FWOOM!**

The statue of the Itarim stood up from his chair in a fury incomparable to the one he had when Kim Chul died. However, the answer to the god statue's question came not from the old man who dragged Hwang Dong-Soo, but from Suho's mouth.

“...Ah, grandpa?”

"Hmm?" Sung Il-Hwan, who had been indifferent to Suho's voice, brightened when he looked at Suho. “No, who is—? Why is my grandson here?”

\* \* \*

Sung Il-Hwan. The father of the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo, whose reason he recalled the memories of his previous life was because of a 'dream'.

- Is that a dream again?

At first, the dream was simply dismissed as a scene from a movie. It was just a fragmentary scene, and the content was also just as childish upon seeing himself fighting monsters. Even so, by the time he woke up in bed in the morning and drank his coffee, most of the memories he had seen in that dream had already disappeared. Rubbed out from his mind just as easily as an eraser does. Well, that tends to happen in dreams.

However, no matter how much one rubs out the lead with an eraser, if one kept erasing it a lot of times, at least a trace would remain on the paper.

-... Is it that dream again?

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At some point, Sung Il-Hwan began to wake up in the morning and even into the afternoon, with the scenes he saw in his dream unable to disappear from his mind.

Either way, he didn't care. It was just a dream after all.

But, there was just one thing that bothered him.

-Why is Jin-Woo...

In Sung Il-Hwan's dreams, his son, Sung Jin-Woo, always appeared at the end of that dream. Always looking at him with a resentful gaze. Always those words were coming out of his mouth and towards him.

*...I missed you, always.*

And Sung Il-Hwan touched the face of his son who had come close to him. Tears dripped from his son's eyes as they wet the back of his hand. *Those tears are so warm... Even though I know it's a dream, why does it hurt so much?*

*Even though this father has done nothing for you, you...*

-You've grown well.

At those words, Sung Jin-Woo asked, revealing a terrifyingly heavy anger.

-Is it the Rulers? Are they the ones controlling you and throwing you away, father?

*Rulers. I don't know who they are,* Sung Il-Hwan shook his head.

-They simply gave me a chance to choose. I chose to protect you, and that choice was not wrong in the slightest.

As he answered, his hand, which had been caressing his son's face, turned to ash and began to scatter.

- I wanted to talk more with you. I wanted to be with my son a little longer.

In the end, he made him erase his father twice from his son's heart. Tears flowed from the eyes of Sung Il-Hwan, who tried to hold it in until the end.

- I'm sorry... that I couldn't be a good father.

He ended with that as the rain started falling.

Sung Il-Hwan's body turned to ashes. Even in the midst of flowing ash, Sung Il-Hwan could be seen. The look on his son's face as he approaches to hug this ugly father's crumbling body. The fierce anger in those eyes.

- ¡AAAAAAAAHH!

Then the mana in the air vibrated. The sky, the air, and the ground wept.

- Can you hear me, Monarchs! You will definitely pay for what you have done today!

The roar of the angry Shadow Monarch shook the heavens and the earth.

'...*Shadow Monarch?*' That day Sung Il-Hwan got up from the bed, put his hand on his forehead and sighed.

'*Oh, oh my...*' Just like that, Sung Il-Hwan recalled the memories of his previous life that he forcibly erased in order to enjoy a normal life with his son. As always, everything has a meaning. Some time after Sung Il-Hwan recalled his previous life, Sung Jin-Woo went missing. Just like last time when he disappeared to wage a lonely war, but now the cataclysm occurred afterwards.

-Has the Earth changed back then?

Looking at the gate and the dungeon break that started again, Sung Il-Hwan could not hide his bitterness. But unfortunately, there was nothing the old man could do.

No, in fact, there are things you can do if you put your mind to it. Because he, who had grown old like this, had the same magical power as before. However, Sung Il-Hwan, who was already an old man, had no intention of making the same choice as before. Because the voice of his son, who always looked at him with resentment in his dreams, was strongly engraved in his head.

-Are you going to leave without a word again, Father?

'*No way. I can't make the same mistake.*' Sung Il-Hwan chose. A long time ago, as soon as he awakened his magical power, he became a hunter and jumped into the dungeon without hesitation. For the noble mission to save the world by devoting oneself to the wealth and glory that follows.

'*But this time I'm protecting my family.*' In this life, Sung Il-Hwan still stayed by his wife's side even though he had awakened his magical power. It is the young people's job to protect the world. Therefore he chose to spend the rest of his life with his beloved wife, growing old in five years.

Of course, he used fishing as an excuse from time to time to properly clean the simple dungeons near his house before returning. But one day, what he discovered was a black market that had popped up near his house. Sung Il-Hwan thought to come out after doing a sneaky investigation with a light heart at first.

Unfortunately the moment he set foot in it, that moment he found the statue of the Itarim inside...

[Your soul, I must have it.]

'!!!'

A bizarre voice penetrated Sung Il-Hwan's mind.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

\* \* \*

**SWHOOOM**

**WOOOOSH!!**

Sung Il-Hwan approached Suho, narrowly avoiding the blue rays emitted from the eyes of the statue of the Itarim.

"Grandpa! What are you doing here!"

"Oh look who's talking, I should be saying that to you! What are you doing here?"

"Because of you grandpa!"

Just then, Suho looked at Sung Il-Hwan up close, his eyes widened. Sung Il-Hwan had numerous Star Pieces all over his body unlike Kim Chul and other foreign believers that only had one stuck to their foreheads.

"Grandpa, what the hell is this..."

"Ah, this? I was caught by chance, so I almost suffered some modification."

"Inventory!" Suho immediately opened his inventory and took out the 'Item: Echo Forest Spring Water'. Then, avoiding the giant feet of the statue of Itarim descending from above to trample them, he passed the potion to Sung Il-Hwan's mouth.

"Eat this first!"

Sung Il-Hwan drank the detoxifying potion. However, even in such an urgent situation, it felt quite pleasant to have a conversation with his grandson after a long time.

"This doesn't seem very tasty. Is it really good for you?"

*'This isn't the time to joke!'*

Suho hit the zealots attacking from the side, and together with Sung Il-Hwan, escaped from the statue's attack range.

An angry voice erupted from the mouth of the statue towards Sung Il-Hwan.

[You worthless mortal! High priest, rise up!]

**¡Aaaaaaa!**

As he said that, blue energy surged from Hwang Dong-Soo's body on the floor and floated into the air. Hwang Dong-Soo, like Sung Il-Hwan, also had dozens of Star Pieces embedded all over his body.

[How on earth did you get away from the power of the Outer God Jewel!]

"It was only a trivial matter." Sung Il-Hwan laughed at the words of the god. "I guess you guys don't quite understand what worthless really means." Then he touched the dozens of Star Pieces embedded in his body and said. "You're going to brainwash me with these insignificant stones?"

**FWOOM!**

The statue's attack shattered the ground he stood on.

"Wuaaaaa!" Hwang Dong-Soo, losing his temper, flew in and attacked them. The blue energy he emitted exploded and one side of the chapel collapsed. Sung Il-Hwan lightly got out of there and spread his arms. Surprisingly, dozens of Star Pieces embedded in his body wrapped around him, radiating blue energy, a glamor similar to that of brass.

**Fwom!**

The blue aura turned into a darker shade as Sung Il-Hwan's hands grabbed the transforming mana around him. He swung it as if he were holding two daggers.

**Slice slice slice slice!**

Blue swords hacked through the air and attacked the statue and Hwang Dong-Soo.

[How dare you—! An unbeliever who has no reverence for God is trying to use divine power!]

The statue of the Itarim became even more angry and emitted blue rays from its eyes. At that moment...

"Grandfather!" Suho hit the statue's leg with all his might.

**Crack!**

[!!!]

The balance of the divine statue collapsed and the direction of the blue ray was twisted in the opposite direction of Sung Il-Hwan,

"Oh my, when did my grandson grow up like this?" grinned with an expression of great admiration at seeing his grandson after a long time. "You really are just like your father, no one will be able to deny that after this!"

"Grandpa." Suho broke Sung Il-Hwan's joke and faced him forward with serious eyes. "Could you follow my instructions?" At those words, the corner of Sung Il-Hwan's mouth went up.

"Alright." At that moment, Sung Il-Hwan turned his head toward the statue, and his eyes changed as sharply as Suho's. Suho ran towards the statue with all his might.

The blue ray of the god statue barely passed over Suho's head.

"¡Haaaaaaa!"

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Suho raised his fist. But what he attacked was not the statue of God, rather the floor of the chapel where the statue stood.

**CRACK!**

[!!!]

In an instant, the divine statue's balance was shaken.

"Now!" As if he had waited for those words, Sung Il-Hwan's figure appeared in front of the statue.

——!

A blue light exploded.

**T-ring!**

['Blessing of Itarim: Rules of Cartenon Temple' are canceled.]

## 192

**Pwak Pwah Pwoh Pwah Pwoh-!**

A blue aura rages.

"This power! Give it back!" The Star Piece.

Dozens of Outer God Jewels were forcibly implanted in Sung Il-Hwan's body. From there, the mana of the outer universe stretched out and was condensed into two daggers that exploded in his hands.

[How dare—!]

**FWOOOM!**

A blue ray of light, emanating from the eyes of the enraged god, split the wall in half.

[An insignificant mortal!]

**BAAAM!**

**Qu**

The chapel began to collapse under the power of the god who was extremely angry. However, the chapel was already meaningless. The 'Debuff: Rules of the Temple of Cartenon', which had already dominated the chapel, had been broken.

**¡Whoop!**

Finally, the coercive power that was strangling Suho's magical power disappeared.

"Good." Suho's eyes shone eerily. That gaze intersected in the air with that of Sung Il-Hwan, who was blocking the statue from above. Sung Il-Hwan was talking to Suho with his eyes.

*'Now, let's see what you got.'*

How much he has grown so far! Even though it happened suddenly, Sung Il-Hwan noticed quite a few things as soon as he saw Suho. How could he not? He was Sung Jin-Woo's father, and Sung Jin-Woo was another father who raised a son he was more proud of than anyone else.

He was a warrior that was fighting out there to protect his son in a place where no one knew about.

Therefore... *'I don't need any explanation.'* It was already clear in Sung Il-Hwan's eyes. *'Show me your skills.'* Beneath Suho's feet, the great shadow connected to the deep darkness. *'How deep is your darkness!'* How much the grandson, who he had always thought of as a child, had grown!



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“Arise!” Suho's order has been given.

**Whoaaaagh!**

[Shadow extraction succeeded.]

[Shadow extraction succeeded.]

[Shadow extraction succeeded.]

At that compulsory order, new shadow soldiers rose from the corpses of the foreign believers who had melted in the rays of the god.

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

[Shadow Fanatic Lv.1]

**¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!**

**Kyaaaaaaaa!**

The foreign believers who came back from the dead were literally demons themselves. From them, fierce hatred for the false god, who used and betrayed their blind faith during their lifetime, erupted.

“All troops, charge!”

**WUAAAAAAAAA!**

At the command of Suho, the Shadow Legion roared in unison and stretched out toward the statue of Itarim.

[The stats of shadow soldiers fighting in the shadow of the caster increase by 50%.]

The monarch's realm amplified its wrathful power.

[Ha ha ha ha! You detestable Outer God! I'll crush you!]

Kim Chul, who was more enthusiastic than anyone else in his lifetime, now took the lead before anyone else and rushed to the statue of Itarim.

[You're back, Iron!]

Beru was delighted and commanded the battlefield from above –Kim Chul– Iron's head.

**Quarreung!**

The giant feet of the statue crushed the shadow soldiers mercilessly.

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Thorn of Pain'.]



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“W-what is that?!”

“A moving stone statue!”

The Hunters suddenly widened their eyes at the appearance of a huge statue of God that appeared outside as the chapel building collapsed.

Despite coming here to evade taxes, they were still active hunters. Regardless of who started first, they instinctively raised all their magic power and prepared themselves for battle.

However...

**Flash!**

“!!!”

The Stardust necklace hanging around their necks suddenly reacted to the presence of the statue and emitted blue light. The light was weak compared to the Star Pieces, but it was enough.

“Ouch?!”

“!!!”

“Huh, why is the necklace—!”

Stardust necklaces around their necks held their bodies in the air like shackles. As if an evil spirit had possessed them.

“What, what is this—!”

“Kek kek!”

The hunters struggled in the air, exuding strange energy, struggling to remove the strangling necklace. At the same time

**¡BOOM!**

“!!!”

Red filled the scene. From the Hunter's eyes bloody tears fell as he saw a large hole in the center of his body. Hwang Dong-Soo indifferently pulled out his fist that pierced the insides of the hunter and shook off the blood.

**Thud.**

He put his palms together with a reverent expression as he watched the fleetingly dying and crumbling corpse in front of him.

“I offer a sacrifice to the Great God.”

### **Suaa**

At that moment, the magic power remaining in the dead Hunter's body was scattered like light powder. And that power became a 'sacrificial offering' that was absorbed into the statue of Itarim.

“What the—!!” The hunters who witnessed the shocking sight struggled to tear off the necklace with all their might.

### **Dduduk!**

“No.. no no no No No NO—!”

### **¡BOOM!**

“...I offer you a sacrifice.”

Another offering was added.

Unlike Sung Il-Hwan, Hwang Dong-Soo has already been completely contaminated by Itarim's divinity. He glared at the non-believers, Sung Suho and Sung Il-Hwan, who were engaged in a fierce battle with the statue of Itarim with blue ghostly eyes.

“Tch, tch. How dare these impious bastards!”

He killed all the hunters in front of his eyes with the most frenzied momentum, and jumped into the battlefield to protect the statue.

### **Flash!**

Just like Sung Il-Hwan, blue energy radiated from his body, but suddenly—

### **Ching!**

“I guess I haven't finished the job yet.”

Hwang Dong-Soo glared at Sung Il-Hwan, a gray-haired old man blocking his way, and gnashed his teeth.

“Sung Il-Hwan!”

“Don't interfere with what my grandson is doing, why don't we, old men, fight instead?”

“Don't be so cocky with me! I was just caught off guard earlier!”

“Oh?”

At the words of Hwang Dong-Soo who shouted in anger, Sung Il-Hwan smiled faintly.

“Do you really think so?”

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There was no further conversation from that point on because Hwang Dong-Soo started attacking him with all his might.

**Bang!**

An S-rank villain who became the high priest of Itarim, and an S-rank hunter who escaped from the false god by his own will. As the powers of the two collided, the outer universe's magic tore through the air.

\* \* \*

[Little Lord! Every time people die, the power of the statue keeps getting stronger!]

As Beru said, the statue of Itarim was absorbing the power of foreign believers and hunters wearing Stardust necklaces when they died. Even the scratches that had been cracked by the attack of the shadow army were recovering in an instant.

*'This will never end!'*

Suho was calmly examining the situation even while dealing with Itarim's personal statue. One thing was certain. That this gigantic new statue fighting now is not the real Itarim. *'Because there's no way my father would have allowed an Itarim to come to Earth.'* So, in the end, this guy is just a moving stone statue with some of the Itarim's power.

*'At most, it's just an alter ego like Arsha. And the fuel that moves the clone body is that blue magic power!'*

**¡Stand up!**

Suho maximized his senses. Then, in his field of vision, the magic of the dead flowed into the statue of Itarim from all directions. And at the end of all that flow—

"Found it!"

Suho, who was attacking the idol, suddenly turned and soared upward.

**Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!**

[!!!]

Suho, who ran vertically after stepping on the statue's huge body, was aiming for the statue's neck! There was a large necklace carved there, which seemed to be just an ordinary decoration, but the energy of the dead was gathering right there.

**Geeeeing-!**

The agitated statue shouted at Hwang Dong-Soo, emitting blue rays to block Suho.

[High priest! Stop him!]

However, Hwang Dong-Soo was not in a situation where he could obey that solemn order.

**Clash!**

**Bang! Bang!**

Sung Il-Hwan pressed down Hwang Dong-Soo with his brutal force.

“Keuk-!”

Eventually, blood fell from Hwang Dong-Soo's mouth. He really hated to admit it, but now it was purely factual. Sung Il-Hwan. This gray-haired old man, who was to become the second High Priest after himself, *'He is strong!'* Overwhelming too! *'Why the hell is that when you are just the same as I am?!'*

Despite being pushed helplessly by Sung Il-Hwan's power, Hwang Dong-Soo gritted his teeth in resentment. What the hell is the difference between him and the old man?

“Both of us are S-rank, and the number of Outer God Jewels embedded in our bodies is the same! So why is there such a difference!?”

“You're asking the obvious.” Sung Il-Hwan responded calmly as he pushed Hwang Dong-Soo, whose mood was worsening.

“It's the difference between the *bowls*.”

“What is that...Are you talking nonsense!?” To Hwang Dong-Soo, who does not remember his previous life, these words can only be dismissed as nonsense. However, from Sung Il-Hwan's point of view, there was no other answer as simple as this. Hwang Dong-Soo, was once an S-rank hunter only to then become the noble souls who fought to protect the world as a soldier for his son Sung Jin-woo.

However, the mission in his past life given to Sung Il-Hwan was different.

The moment Sung Il-Hwan's fist was raised, the magical power of the outer universe was wrapped around it. Hwang Dong-Soo's eyes widened as if tearing at that formidable power.

**Flash!**

Primordial light.

'Fragments of Luminescence' that are now called 'Rulers'. At one time, they entrusted their powers to Sung Il-Hwan to stop the Shadow Monarch from descending. As time passed, circumstances changed, and new instructions were issued.

[Protect the Shadow Monarch.]

He was the Greatest Fragment of Brilliant Light, strongest among all Rulers and at the same time, the darkest King among Monarchs. It was absolutely impossible at the level of 'national level hunters to achieve such a goal. In order to stop him and protect him...

“How much power do you think it would have taken?”

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

“!!!”

With those words, Sung Il-Hwan's fist slammed into Hwang Dong-Soo. Yes. Sung Il-Hwan. With only one thought to protect his son, he fought a lonely fight, toiling himself until his body was crumbling. He was the most brilliant Hunter of all. The soul vessel of Sung Il-Hwan, who survived that noble and terrible end.

“And yet I'm still weak compared to before.” Outer cosmic magic? Outer God Jewel? Even with just this little effort, his bowl wasn't even half full!

“!!!”

“Die and come back.”

That was the last memory Hwang Dong-Soo remembered.

# 193

'Where am I... what is...'

A deep abyss.

The spirit of Hwang Dong-Soo, who was falling endlessly toward the sea after death, caught a glimpse of a lantern.

'Who am I...'

How unfortunate.

In front of his eyes, the panorama of his life flowed rapidly. Now that he took a better look at it, he had not lived such a great life.

*I was born into a family that was a little less fortunate than others, then abandoned by my only older brother for being incompetent. By sheer luck, I became an S-rank villain, but soon after I was getting chased by that damned Choi Jong-In and Woo Jin-Chul!*

*Then I met 'those guys'.*

*'The Foreign Religion'.*

*At first, I thought it was just a multi-level company in the form of a common cult. However, as it turned out, the business they were doing was more diverse than I thought, and the scale was quite large. Above all, if it was for their own purposes, they had the terribleness of not caring about the damage of others at all. But this also gave me more confidence to work with them. It was much easier to deal with people who didn't hide their desires than people who hid their true intentions and pretended to be hypocritical.*

In addition, Hwang Dong-Soo, who was avoiding the Association, was in need of various information. In that aspect, the Foreign Religion Church was worth befriending because its intelligence was quite usable. Accordingly, Hwang Dong-Soo willingly joined hands with the Foreign Religion. Hwang Dong-Soo lent them their power, and they gave Hwang Dong-Soo information. An equal trade relationship where you give each other what you give and receive what you receive. Yeah, that's how it started.

*'Ah, then I came all the way to Yangpyeong...'*

From Hwang Dong-Soo's point of view, this request wasn't particularly difficult. To attack the field dungeon that occurred in Yangpyeong without anyone knowing. To be precise, it was a very simple request to wipe out all the monsters there and help the Foreign Protestant Church open the black market in front of them.

However, '*...They tricked me!*'

**¡Grrr!**



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Hwang Dong-Soo's spirit gritted his teeth fiercely. It was only after he died that he came to his senses. He remembered what the Foreign Religion had done to him.

A field type dungeon in Yangpyeong. From the beginning, there was a suspicious shamanic formation around it. At the time, he thought it was a characteristic of the dungeon, but in fact, the spell was a trap prepared for Hwang Dong-Soo by the Foreign Religion Church. And from the moment Hwang Dong-Soo set foot there, he was in a beautiful state of being under a spell. Like a mantis caught in a spider's web.

Whenever he was praying fervently in the chapel, somewhere in that great world, the Itarim, a foreign being, would always give him a great revelation.

[Spread the Stardust far and wide.]

[Then a huge door will open in this land.]

[Open the door and the Itarim will come.]

[Itarim will come...]

Ah, the Itarim!

*'...I can't believe I was tricked with that bullshit!'*

**¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!**

Hwang Dong-Soo's soul could not hide his resentment. Far below, he could see the afterlife sea opening its mouth at him.

I didn't want to go there.

Why?

Are you angry about being played by the Foreign Religion?

You want to get revenge on them?

No.

A more fundamental reason, he had realized that he had an extremely important mission.

**¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!**

Hwang Dong-Soo's soul opened its mouth and roared. He struggled with his arms and struggled to get out of the terrible sea that was engulfing him. And he eagerly stretched out his hand toward that high place, that distant sky from which he had fallen.

*'I can't die like this!'*

*'I will come back!'*

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

'I am...!'

'I am!'

At the end of Hwang Dong-Soo's desperate gaze, in the distant sky, an extremely fierce battle was taking place even at this moment.

**Clash! Break!**

**Rrrrrumble!**

Statue of the Itarim.

A huge stone statue made by Foreign Religions in the shape of the Itarim!

Alongside it, there was a tiny human being fighting a battle against that huge monster!

'!!!' Hwang Dong-Soo looked at his face. He saw those eyes. He witnessed the darkness unfolding in the hunter's hands. Then, instinctively, he realized an important truth, who that young man is. The one whose darkness resembles '**Him**', a great being unlike the Itarim!

**¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!**

[Please save me! My dying soul!]

'Greed' roared.

At that moment, 'Suho', who was fighting with Itarim's statue, turned his head to see him. His eyes found the soul of Hwang Dong-Soo, who was slowly burying and disappearing into the sea after death. He found his desperate hand. Suho reached out and grabbed him without hesitation.

"Arise,"

!!!

"Greed."

**T-ring!**

[Shadow extraction succeeded.]

[Kuaaaaaa!]

Greed took his hand and raised himself from the sea of death. Then, with the momentum of an active volcano, he jumped straight up and punched the face of the goddamn god Itarim in front of him.

**Crack–BAM!**

Half of the statue's face exploded and was smashed.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[Ahh! How dare you betray me!]

Along with a tremendous killing blow, the giant hand of the god statue flew and crushed Greed's body.

**Bang!**

However,

[You dare!]

Greed, which blocked the giant palm of the statue of God with force, slowly emerged from underneath it.

[Greed Lv.1]

General rank!

[Are you trying to trick *me*, who was once in the Shadow Army?]

[Kieek! You're back, Greed!]

[Greed!]

Beru and Iron cheered as they welcomed Greed's return. Greed recognized them too and his eyes lit up. However, it was not a situation to share the joy of a leisurely reunion.

[Everyone--]

Like Iron, Greed, who returned as a shadow soldier after a long time, instinctively knew Suho's identity. And the role he will play as the strongest soldier here.

[Help the young lord! I will take the vanguard!]

**Fwom!**

At that moment, all the shadow soldiers rushed towards Itarim's statue along the Greed. And all of those attacks were unleashed on the necklace of the statue that Suho was attacking.

**Bam Bam Bam Bam Pooh!**

Stone Pieces bounced in all directions, and eventually the statue's necklace was cracked. However, Greed, who was the high priest of the Itarim, knew that the statue's real weakness was hidden inside the necklace.

**Shugak-!**

The nucleus of the statue revealed outside was cut out.

**T-ring!**

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[You have eliminated the statue of the Foreign Religious Church.]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

[Your level has risen!]

**Crrraaakkk!**

Before Suho, who had achieved a tremendous level-up, could be happy, the huge new statue began to collapse on the spot. And the aftermath was directed to the people who remained nearby.

"Ahh!" The surviving foreign cultists, demons, and ordinary hunters scattered in confusion as stone fragments rained down on their heads.

"Protect Grandpa!" It was Greed who jumped out faster than anyone else at Suho's cry.

[Sung Il-Hwan! I'm here to save you!]

"...Hah look at your sudden change of attitude." Sung Il-Hwan, who was sitting on the floor exhausted after pouring all his energy into it, burst out laughing. Then he was meekly grabbed by Greed's arm and got out of there.

[Gwa! Sir are you okay?]

"Ah you already know such an answer."

Blood flowed from Sung Il-Hwan's mouth as he smiled and replied. Seeing that, Greed hurriedly brought Sung Il-Hwan in front of Suho.

[Little Lord! Come on, the potion!]

"!!!" Suho was surprised to see Sung Il-Hwan's condition and took out a healing potion and fed it to him. However, even after receiving and drinking the potion, Sung Il-Hwan's complexion did not improve at all. It was natural. Even though the idol was destroyed, dozens of Star Pieces were still implanted all over his body.

[Kieheek! Sung Il-Hwan!]

"Grandpa! Here drink another bottle! this one too, and this one..." Suho and Beru hurriedly took out all the mana potions and detox potions and poured them into his mouth. However, Sung Il-Hwan was just proud of his grandson who was so concerned about him.

"Haha. There's no need to fuss. This old man is not dead yet, so stop it." Sung Il-Hwan stretched out with an open mind. However, an ominous blue aura was still leaking from every corner of his body.

"Greed." Suho glared at Greed, who was the high priest of Itarim, and asked. "Tell me everything you know. What's my grandfather's condition?" Greed had dozens of Star Pieces on his body, just like Sung Il-Hwan, so he must have known something. In addition, since all the memories of the previous life were returned, Greed knew the most among them.

[Now Sung Il-Hwan's condition is...]

Greed opened his mouth with a calm expression and looked at the Star Pieces embedded in Sung Il-Hwan's body. *Shit shit shit*. His body was finely cracked around the Star Pieces embedded in his body.

[A Star Piece is an item that causes a rift in the dimension to bring in the magic of the outer universe. In other words, it is similar to a micro-gate.]

"A gate?" At those words, Suho raised his eyes.

"Hehehe." It was Sung Il-Hwan, whose lips were twitching with a shy expression at Suho's words. Over the past few years, he had a bad relationship with Suho, but that was entirely the result of the information each knew.

From Sung Il-Hwan's point of view, he obviously knew that Sung Jin-Woo was a Shadow Monarch, so even if he suddenly disappeared, he didn't have to worry too much. From the standpoint of Suho, the son of Sung Jin-Woo, who wouldn't think their grandfather would be so uncaring upon reacting calmly to their son's disappearance?

However, seeing that Beru was next to him, it seemed that those misunderstandings had been resolved without reconciliation. Now, seeing his grandson restlessly looking after himself after a long time, the feeling of being tickled somewhere was not too bad.

"Hmm. Don't worry too much. I know my body well." Sung Il-Hwan suppressed the corners of his mouth as much as possible and patted Suho's back with a solemn expression. Then he turned his eyes and looked at the gate he came out of. "Suho, let's go inside for now."

"To the dungeon?"

"Yes."

Only then did Suho's eyes turn to the gate Sung Il-Hwan was pointing at.

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He pointed to the gate where Sung Il-Hwan came out.

The appearance of that gate was quite different from the ones Suho had seen so far. Common gates are basically round in shape. Of course, although the size may vary slightly or the shape may be distorted, it is basically in the form of a 'hole' in the air.

On the other hand, the gate through which Sung Il-Hwan escaped is a 'crack' itself. It was as if the walls of the dimension had been randomly torn to shreds and were shaking unsteadily.

*'It looks the same as the sky I saw in the Glacier Dungeon.'*

The sky of the Glacier Dungeon was torn apart with countless rifts intertwined. Although the scale is very small, Suho thought it was similar to the scenery there.

"Know in advance. Beyond this is not an ordinary dungeon."

Sung Il-Hwan muttered with a serious expression as he and Suho walked in front of the gate. At those words, Greed, the former high priest of the Itarim, and Iron, the general priest, followed suit and began to add information they knew one by one.

[Small Lord, here in Yangpyeong, several field dungeons have been intentionally neglected.]

[Those field-type dungeons gradually expanded their territory and soon merged into one.]

[This will further distort the rift, further tearing the dimensional wall. Just like this.]

A phenomenon called 'Unification of Cracks' or 'Acceleration of 'Cracks'. However, there was no need to use such difficult expressions, and Beru, who was the tutor of young Suho, explained it very easily.

[This is a simple principle. If one gate is called a 'dot', then when two gates are connected to each other, it becomes a 'line'. And if 3 or more gates are connected together...]

**Crack! cr-crackle!**

[It becomes a 'node' like this.]

Beru muttered as he glared at the gate that had come right in front of him with narrow eyes.

[And when a spoonful of Itarim's tricks are added to this, it seems that the gate to the 'void' is artificially created.]

"The void?"

[Yes. The dimensional gap.]

A 'dungeon' refers to a world in another dimension far from Earth.

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'Gate' means the passage that connects the two dimensions.

And 'Void' is literally the gap that exists between those dimensions.

[Nothing exists, and yet it is an empty space where anything can exist.]

It meant that the place where Sung Jin-Woo had wandered aimlessly in search of the Monarchs with the shadow army existed beyond this gate.

[So, the Foreign Religion Church also called this phenomenon 'Void' as the name suggests.]

[The ultimate goal of the Foreign Protestant Church is to spread this 'Void Gate' all over the earth, ultimately creating a super-large rift that connects directly to the outer universe where they are located.]

After turning former High Priests and Priests into soldiers, insider information was coming out easily.

[The reason why the foreign believers built the chapel here in the first place is also because they have to create a statue of a god near this void gate in order to connect the ritual of the Itarim...]

"Now, wait a minute." Esil, who was listening to their conversation, suddenly grabbed Sung Il-Hwan from behind with a serious expression. "Then doesn't that mean that the Itarim might be there once you go inside? How can you go in there without any preparation then?" At Esil's concern, Sung Il-Hwan smiled warmly and patted Esil's head.

"That is not an issue. I already went in once."

[It is impossible to reach outer space with only three or four dungeons combined.]

[If so, we would have already been invaded by Itarim.]

"COUGH-."

Suddenly, Sung Il-Hwan started coughing up blood again, and after hearing all the explanations, Suho finally realized what was going on in Sung Il-Hwan's body. If one Star Piece is a 'dot', two are 'lines'. And more than three... *It can't be*, a 'void' was occurring in the body of Sung Il-Hwan, who had dozens of Star Pieces embedded in one body.

"...A void is about to occur in your body, grandpa."

"Haha. Yes, it's easy to understand. I'm kind of like a walking gate right now. If I continue like this, my body will eventually be torn apart and create a dimensional rift."

"...Let's go in." Suho stepped into the gate with a firm look on his face. Right now it's just a temporary measure, but it's one thing he can do right away. If you don't want the dimensional rift to occur in your body, then you just have to go directly into the dimensional rift.

**Shuwaaaaak**

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And so they passed through the ominous blazing gate, into the void. Soon, a bizarrely distorted world unfolded before them. A wide open horizon was visible in the distance, and a land full of jumbled and chaotic shimmer appeared up front.

This place was the gap of the dimension, the void.

“Beru.”

[Yes.]

Suho saw this bizarre world and called Beru. “Is this the place where my father has been wandering for decades?”

[That's right. In order to find the dimension of monarchs, like the Tombs of the Light Dragons... he had to wander around aimlessly and find his way.]

At Suho's grumbling words, Beru nodded heavily as he recalled that time.

[Looking back, the journey was indeed long and arduous. One day, the lord expressed it as such, saying that it feels like he was floating on an endless desert.]

"A desert..." Suho couldn't say anything at the sound of those words. Sung Il-Hwan also bit his lip at those words and muttered.

“Yes, this is where Jin-Woo...”

Sung Jin-Woo, this empty world where his one and only son wandered for decades with the mission to protect the world. He couldn't express the feelings in his heart as a father who came to look at this place a long time ago. However, regardless of their feelings, it was fortunate that from the moment they entered this place, the ominous cracks in Sung Il-Hwan's body completely stabilized.

Greed, who was in exactly the same situation as him, explained with great relief.

[For this reason, it is safe for the High Priests of the Foreign Religious Church to stay within this area as much as possible. It's okay to go out for a short time, but after using the power of the Star Pieces excessively like before, if you don't hurry up and come inside, your body could be shattered.]

At those words, Suho looked at Sung Il-Hwan's complexion again. “Grandpa, are you all right now?”

"Yes. Much better." Sung Il-Hwan, who seemed like he was about to collapse at any moment, was feeling better than before, almost as if he hadn't been ill in the first place. The effect of drinking the potion was finally revealed as well.

[However, if this happens, Mr Sung Il-Hwan will likely have to continue to be confined here.]

Beru looked at Sung Il-Hwan and shed tears with a very sad expression. Suho looked back at the Greed and Iron and asked. “Is there any way to rip the Star Piece out of his body?”



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[It is already a risk to get one out. And the high priest class is full of Star Pieces...]

"Then... Can't he just stay in my shadow?"

[The Shadow Dungeon is still a dungeon. It is much better for him to be safe in the void...]

"Hm..."

No matter how much he thought about it, when the conclusion was the same, Suho's expression became serious. In order to evoke the gloomy atmosphere, Sung Il-Hwan smiled and patted Suho on the back.

"Haha. don't take it too seriously Jin-Woo has been wandering here for decades. You can think of it as a small traveling trip for a while. Your grandma would likely be worried but as long as I don't use magic, I can go out for a while, and that's no problem. Oh, right, I have to go and visit her right now."

"Ah, that's right, Grandma." Only then was Suho reminded of his grandmother and aunt, who were still waiting anxiously at the association.

\* \* \*

"Honey!"

"Dad!"

When Suho and Sung Il-Hwan returned to the Yangpyeong branch, many people were waiting for them there. First, Suho's grandmother and aunt were hugged by Sung Il-Hwan crying. Suho turned his gaze and looked at the association hunters who were almost ready for war behind them.

"Hunter Sung Suho, welcome." Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok had gathered all the power of the association that could be summoned immediately to hit the black market. He approached Suho with a joyous spirit. "We have already interrogated the Yangpyeong branch manager and figured out the whole situation. Would you like to go with me?"

"You are always one step late."

"I'm glad— wait what?"

"It is over."

"Wha- what do you mean?"

"I killed the ones you were going to kill, and captured the rest."

"... " Suho was a bit embarrassed by team leader Han Jae-Hyeok's confused expression. On the way back, Suho killed all the demons in the black market and earned experience points. And the hunters who used the black market were arrested by the Association hunters. Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok said that since they were caught on charges of tax evasion rather

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than being villains, they would face huge fines. And the disposal of the most important thing in this case remained.

“The Association has decided to confiscate all Stardust necklaces sold on the market. The same goes for the Star Pieces in the black market.”

“Then how will they be disposed of? The fault for this incident must be on the Association’s side as well.”

“First of all, the president of the association is still in North Korea, so the specific plan...”

“As the president of the association...”

### **Chills.**

Team leader Han Jae-Hyeok, who was talking with Suho for a moment, suddenly got goosebumps.

"Tell me... How far can I trust the Association?"

“...!” When he met Suho's black eyes staring at him, he felt as if he was falling into a distant darkness. But was it because of the mood? The thick and heavy air suddenly became lighter with a hook, and Suho smiled at team leader Han Jae-Hyeok and said.

“How about we do this instead.”

“...Yes?”

“Anyways, because of this incident, the Association has lost my trust, and since I solved the black market problem, I will keep all the Star Pieces. Even the Stardust necklaces I retrieved.”

“No wait, that's a bit...”

“By the way, this is not a proposal.”

“...” There was nothing more that team leader Han Jae-Hyeok could say at the aura felt from Suho.

\* \* \*

In this way, Suho was handed all the Star Pieces and Stardust necklaces spread across the country.

“So what are you going to use this for?” Upon Beru's question, Suho immediately opened the shop window.

“I will sell everything for gold of course.”

[Kieek! Such a brilliant idea!]

Beru was greatly impressed by Suho's wisdom. However, this was not the end of Suho's plan.

### **Ching. Ching.**

Since the amount of Star Pieces and Stardust necklaces were considerable, the shop's gold, which had been on the bottom for a while, piled up quickly. And Suho used this gold to buy a bunch of potions. Just mana potions.

[Kieek? Isn't that a healing potion?]

When Suho, who knew he would find a way to improve Sung Il-Hwan's condition right away, suddenly bought a mana potion, Beru put on a puzzled expression. "Potions aren't enough." In the process of killing demons in the black market, Suho had already tested to see if there was a safe way to tear off a Star Piece from their forehead. The results were all failures. They all died with broken heads. In other words, Sung Il-Hwan could not be saved with just a potion.

"Instead I need to make a divine water of life."

[!!!]

Beru's eyes widened at Suho's words. Suho recalled the ingredients of the divine water of life.

1. Spring water in the Echo Forest.
2. Fragments of the World Tree.
3. Purified Demon King's blood.

Suho had asked dead Monarchs about the fragments of the World Tree before, and the answer that came back was the same.

[The King of Beasts, the Beast Monarch shrugs.]

[The Queen of Insects, the Monarch of Plague, tilts her head with a pensive expression.]

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch, says that if there is one that knows the location of the World Tree, there is probably only one.]

That one is...

The King of demonic specters, the Monarch of Transfiguration. Only Yogmund, the Monarch of the fantasy world who had the ability to cross all dimensions by opening the gates at will, would know its location. He couldn't think of a way to ask the Monarch who had already died. Suddenly a thought ran through Suho's head.

The final battle.

The strongest monarch, The Dragon Emperor, whom the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo fought until the very end. What was the reason that the dragon was able to fight Sung

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Jin-Woo until the last moment in the first place? Wasn't it because the Transfiguration Monarch cooperated with him and opened countless gates for the Dragon Emperor's army? Therefore,

"If it's the Dragon Emperor, he might know something."

**Chin.**

[You have entered The Shadow Dungeon.]

Suho picked up the 'Kamish Egg' that was kept in the corner of the pyramid. Next to it, he piled up a huge amount of mana potions, put one of them in his mouth and muttered with a meaningful expression.

"This bastard, I will hatch it today."

**Shuaaa-!**

In this way, a great amount of magical power began to be injected into Kamish's egg, endlessly.

# 195

...Ominous, something's ominous.

Arsha, the queen bee, was watching from a distance what Suho was doing, looking very nervous.

**Fwoosh!**

The endless aura of magic from Suho caused the pyramid of Ammut to vibrate with great ominousness. Meanwhile, Ammut, the owner of this place, was watching all these phenomena with interest.

[Is it really possible for dragon eggs to hatch with such a trick?]

In theory, it wasn't wrong. However, it was unclear whether a normal Dragon Clan could be born in this way. Right now, that egg is too small for a normal egg. Originally, that egg would have been steadily showered by its parent dragon for many years, and the egg should have been 10 times larger than it is now. However, his parents, Kamish, died beforehand, leaving him premature. Although it could also be because Suho, who wasn't even a dragon, was giving him a mana shower and he didn't think about increasing the size of the egg itself at all.

[...Perhaps, at best, they will be born premature, or they may be born dead.]

At Arsha's words, Beru, who had been chewing on a pile of mana stones that he had smuggled out of the black market, laughed loudly.

[You should know that the Dragon Clan is comparable to the noble blood of our Young Liege! Instead of the magic power of the significant Dragon Tribe, the Little Lord Himself is feeding it with his magic power, and you should know that it is rather glorious!]

[... I'll just shut up.]

Ammut left Beru behind and approached Suho for a daily quest.

[Now, hatching eggs is important, but start with today's training and then move on.]

"Oh, it's time already." Suho jumps up without saying a word. But he still had Kamish's egg in his hand. At that, Ammut burst out laughing.

[Are you going to keep holding it during training?]

"Absolutely. My grandfather's health depends on it, and I don't want to waste my time."

While answering, Suho was still breathing magic into Kamish's egg. At that eager look, Ammut's smile rose to the point where the corners of his mouth tore up.

"So you are going to do push ups with one arm up!"

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"It's not much."

Suho was bandaged all over his body like a mummy. At this, Ammut chuckled, looking even more satisfied.

[Let's start from scratch today!]

**Too-doo-crack!**

Before he could finish his words, Suho's arm began to do push-ups, and there was an exciting, bone-breaking sound. However, Suho only frowned slightly, and continued to do push-ups with one arm. And with his other hand, he continued to infuse magic into Kamish's eggs.

[...Everybody's crazy.]

Arsha, who watched the terrible priestly relationship from a distance, looked fed up.

**Shwaaaaa**

In the meantime, Kamish's eggs were awaiting the time of hatching little by little, with an ominous aura.

\* \*\*

And so a day passed, two days passed, and then the third day. Contrary to Suho's rant that he would finish it in one day, Kamish's eggs still showed no signs of hatching. In the first place, it was impossible for the dragons to complete in one day what they had to do for so many years. However, Suho was also desperate about Sung-Il-hwan's well-being, and he had already been wrestling with Kamish's egg for three days without sleep.

"Our Suho is suffering so much because of this foolish grandfather." Worried about Suho, he visited the shadow dungeon for a while, and Sung Il-Hwan muttered with a bitter expression. But even in the meantime, there were signs of a crack in his body. He had to return quickly to the void before it became dangerous...

**Cr–Crack crack!**

It was then.

"Huh?"

"Oh."

[Kiek?]

"Quack?" In an instant, everyone's eyes widened. At last, the Kamish's eggs were beginning to hatch!

[The Beast Monarch, King of Beasts, lifts up his ears.]

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[The Queen of Insects, Plague Monarch, folds her arms and watches.]

[The King of Snowfolk, Frost Monarch...]

Even for the deceased monarchs, the hatching of Kamish's eggs was of primary concern. After all, isn't it logical to think that the dragon would be the descendant of the Dragon King and Destruction Monarch, Antares? At this moment a successor is born who will inherit the power of one of the most powerful monarchs in the world with the exception of the Shadow Monarch.

[ You almost got it there Young Liege! You just need to push harder!]

With Beru's support, Suho put another bottle of mana potion in his mouth and poured out his magic power with all his might, until finally—

**Crack!**

Breaking open the egg, a small lizard poked its face out of it.

"Oh, It hatched!"

[Kieeeeeek! It really hatched!]

[Hwaa, to think that...]

Everyone shouted Hurray! at the same time, while Arsha was the only one who closed her eyes and sighed.

*'... He actually hatched the egg.'*

Finally... That dangerous race was born on this earth.

And indeed, the look in Arsha's eyes was truly terrifying.

Short black horns sticking out of the head. An elongated body and tail that looks like a lizard. Attached to its side are short limbs, stubby black claws, and small wings. It was only small in size, but it was a hatchling cub of the dragon clan. For some reason, after he had broken out of the egg he stared into the void.

'Can you see?' Suho was worried about the look. After all, he wasn't born normally, so he couldn't help but be worried. But those worries were over-founded.

**¡Boom!**

Suddenly, he came to his senses, stared straight ahead, his eyes wide open. Then his eyes met Suho's, who was holding him with both hands.

**Blink blink.**

The dragon blinked his round eyes, smiled broadly at Suho, and opened his mouth.

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"..... Beep!"

**T-ring!**

[Pets: Red Dragon Lv.1]

"Oh!" It's been a long time since the pet system kicked in! And a name tag sprung up above the baby dragon's head.

[?? Lv.1]

Red Dragon

"Oh, you just became a pet, right? Is it because you were born from the magic I fed you?" Suho muttered, looking at the system message in front of him. In retrospect, it was similar to Gray's tame.

**T-ring!**

[You can give your pet a name.]

[Please choose a name for your pet.]

'A *name*.' Suho, who had been pondering the name for a while, suddenly heard a growl next to him.

"Grrrr."

Was there an instinctive sense of competition between them? Suddenly, the first pet, Gray, began barking viciously, glaring at the dragon cub from the side. "Woof! Woof!!" The way he wrinkled his nose and bared his teeth fiercely was incredibly rude.

[The Beast Monarch, King of Beasts, nods in satisfaction at the valiant appearance of his heir.]

Such proudness only lasted for a moment.

**Tilt.**

"Beep?"

At the sudden noise, the baby dragon's head turned to the side and looked at Gray.

"....." All of a sudden, Gray closed his mouth with a stolid face and lowered his gaze as if he hadn't said anything in the first place.

"Beep?"

"....." The dragon cub tilted his head in wonder, but Gray still kept his head down and didn't look up. The baby dragon turned its head to look at Suho again, and Gray's expression instantly turned into a vicious expression as he began to growl at the baby dragon.



"¡Grrrr!"

"Beep?"

"....." Of course, when the dragon looked at him again, Gray quickly calmed down again, closed his mouth, and rolled his eyes. A surprising shift in posture. He didn't even forget to hide his tail under his hips.

At its appearance, there was a mixture of emotions among the dead monarchs.

[The Beast Monarch, groans.]

[The King of Snowfolk , the Frost Monarch, laughs.]

[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, laughs and squirms.]

Suho felt sorry for Gray, but he also couldn't hold back his laughter either. "I guess he's higher in rank than Gray."

[It's natural, no matter how abnormally born you are, no matter how small your size is, the dragon clan is the dragon clan– Waah?!]

**Shhh-**

Suddenly something as fast as a whip flew out of Arsha's body, which was answering Suho's words, and snatched her away in an instant.

[Sa, please save me, Suho–!]

The culprit is none other than the dragon cub. Arsha's desperate screams faded from the mouth of the baby dragon as it munched on its cheeks.

**Gulp.**

It was indeed an accident that happened in an instant. But before Suho could worry, Arsha appeared from behind again, looking intact.

[Phew. Don't worry, luckily I was in a separate body– Crap!]

**Swoop!**

[.....!]

And once again, it was a baby dragon that snatched Arsha with its long tongue, had devoured her.

"Beep!"

Then, at the look on his face that looked so bright and wide towards Suho, Suho couldn't help but laugh. Once again there was a split of emotions between the dead monarchs.

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[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, drops her head with her face covered.]

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch, laughs.]

"Oh my gosh, he is not just some kind of frog. He's a real apex predator."

Seeing that, Suho smiled and decided on the guy's name.

"Then should his name be Frog or—"

"No, wait. Um, Suho?" Sung Il-Hwan, who held Suho's shoulder with his chin, said with a serious face. "We are in a position where we have to ask the Dragon Emperor for a favor now, so why don't you choose the name of his successor a little more carefully?"

"Oh, I'm sure you're right. Then...."

Sung Il-Hwan breathed a sigh of relief. After all, his life depends on it.

As he pondered the name again, Suho remembered a character name from a game he had played before.

It just so happened that the character was also a spirit lord who dealt with fire, so it seemed appropriate to name the red dragon with it.

"..... Ragnaros. No, maybe 'Ragnar' for short."

**T-ring!**

Once they had chosen a name, a new name came to the head of the baby dragon that was sitting quietly in Suho's hands, rolling its eyeballs as Arsha waited for her to approach again.

[Ragnar Lv.1]

Red Dragon

"Yes. That's much better than a frog."

Only then did Sung Il-Hwan nod in relief when suddenly—

**FWOOM!**

"!!!!"

The moment Ragnar got a name. Suddenly, dark red flames began to burn all over Ragnar's body from Suho's hands.

"Beep!"

The moment when Ragnar let out a long cry for Suho—

**T-ring!**

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[Passive skill '(Unknown)' is triggered.]

Suddenly, he felt the sensation of time stopping as joy appeared in Suho's eyes. The plan had worked! Suho was so glad he was able to meet the dead Monarch right away! But something was odd.

**Flash!**

‘¡AHH!

Suddenly, a terrible scream burst from Suho's mouth. This time, for some reason, something was very different from the case of other monarchs.

**¡Burn!**

“¡AAA AAA HOT! HOT!”

It's so hot!

Suho felt like he was being swallowed by boiling oil!

A tremendous burning pain had rushed down his throat and started burning the veins of his body!

Eventually, Suho's shadow bubbled up, turning into pitch black salt and burning him whole. In the midst of that terrible suffering, Suho's consciousness was gradually sucked into the darkness and...

**Guuuooo**

The end of the deep, deep abyss. In an empty black and white world that has swallowed up even light. Suho finally faced it. A man perched on top of the head of a giant dragon.  
*'That's...!'*

The Emperor.

Antares, King of Dragons, The Destruction Monarch. He scanned Suho's whole body with a look of utter arrogance before speaking,

[You.]

At the familiar aura he felt from Suho, The Emperor suddenly smiled brightly, showing his teeth with a vicious expression on his face.

[... Son of Death!]

**FWAA!**

At that moment, a flesh hotter and more vicious than the boiling lava engulfed Suho.

# 196

A suffocating heat rushed in.

A warning from the senses that far transcended human limits came crashing down.

**T-ring! T-ring! T-ring!**

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is watching you.]

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is hostile towards you.]

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is...]

[Potions and shops cannot be used at the current location, and your condition does not recover even if the level increases.]

A crisis has come to Suho, to the point where you can even feel the urgency from the system messages that come to mind one after another. *'I didn't think it was going to be easy...'* Suho bit his teeth hard and glared at the gigantic burning mountain that filled his field of vision. If the boiling lava had life force and took the form of a dragon, would it look like this? That gigantic light dragon that was constantly burning was the main body of Antares, the Dragon Emperor.

[You certainly have no fear. To think the flesh and blood of the one who dared to scorn me appeared in front of me on its own feet.]

Even though he only uttered it in a low tone, a tremendous pressure seemed to press down on Suho's whole body. Antares. His father's true nemesis, who once waged a vicious war against the Shadow Legion for the longest time among all Monarchs. Indeed, he possessed overwhelming power compared to the monarchs that Suho had experienced so far.

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch uses 'Skill: Breath of Destruction'.]

**RRROOOAAARRR!!!**

A waterfall of red flames poured down on Suho like a whip.

*'Ruler's Authority!'* Suho flew up at full speed and dodged the attack.

A flame that erases everything. An eerie, pure white light barely passed the top of Suho's head.

**Shushak!**

At the same time, two swords appeared in both hands of Suho, the horn of Volcan.

[Use 'Skill: Storm Slash'.]

**Slice! Slice! Slash! Slice!**

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A fierce storm of blades raged and attacked the body of the dragon, which breathed destructive breath.

**ROAR!!**

[It's no use! Are you foolish enough to think the sword made of the devil's horn would fit into this Dragon Emperor's body!]

The Emperor laughed at Suho to the fullest, opened his huge mouth and roared at Suho.

**ROAAAAARRRRR!**

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, uses 'Skill: Dragon Fear'.]

**RRRRUUUMBLEE!!**

The earth howled and the sky shook. No, it was Suho himself who was truly trembling.

**T-ring!**

['Debuff: Fear' is activated.]

[All stats are reduced by 50% for 1 minute.]

*'Ahk!'*

How overwhelming. There was no other word to express it other than this. Suho witnessed his hands shaking while holding Volcan's horns. It was a different level of intimidation compared to fighting against the Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, Queresha. But *'So what?'*

So what do you mean? The opponent is the loser who once kneeled before his father. Wouldn't it be dishonoring to his father's name to back down in fear of such a guy? *'Hold it.'* Suho tightened his trembling chin, forced himself to show his teeth, and smiled.

Then, barely defying the power of the Dragon Fear, he opened his mouth.

*'Now...Are you all watching?'*

There were beings who answered him.

[The King of Beasts, the Beast Monarch, is watching you.]

[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, is watching you.]

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch is watching you.]

The gazes of the other monarchs who bestowed blessings on Suho poured on him.

[Hoo?]

Suho wasn't the only one who felt that gaze. The dragon raised its eyes as if he had found something interesting.

**¡Wooooosh!**

Suddenly, silver powder scattered around Suho, and the illusions of the dead monarchs appeared. Receiving their gaze, the Dragon Emperor grinned and asked.

[What did you do? That you managed to attract other monarchs to your side.]

*'I am... I am their priest.'* Under the protection of the dead monarchs, Suho answered.

[Priest?]

*'Yes. And you'll need one as well so that your heir can inherit your power anyway, right?'*

[...The heir who will inherit my power?]

At that, the dragon laughed.

[Could it be that you're talking about the fool you hatched? Him, becoming *my* successor?]

*'Fool?'*

Something is strange. The Dragon Emperor sincerely laughed at Suho's proposal.

[It's quite a feat to hatch a Kamish's egg with the magical power of a mere human.]

But so what?

[Do you really think that a bug that has been turned into someone's pet deserves to inherit the power of 'Dragon Emperor'?]

He could no longer hold back his anger towards Suho. And at the same time, he felt immense shame at the weakness of the young dragon, who had been reduced to a mere human pet as soon as he was born.

**GRRRR!**

The prideful and arrogant Dragon Emperor turned into a huge flame and launched itself at Suho.

**RWAAAAAAAAAAAAARRR!!**

[Child of shadows, you shall burn and suffer here forever!]

**ROOOARR!!!**

At that moment, the whole world turned into boiling lava and swallowed Suho. This is the realm of Antares. If he wanted to, he could have covered the entire space with fire. And Suho had no way to avoid the flames.

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'¡AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!'

All I can do is writhe and scream in a terrible burning pain. In order to save him, other monarchs hurriedly bestowed blessings.

[The spiritual body of 'Pet: Gray' is strengthened in the body of the priest.]

**¡Woosh!**

Suho's hair turned silver and a divine wind enveloped him.

[Use 'Skill: Cold Blizzard'.]

The Frost Monarch raised a blizzard against the flames of Antares.

[The Queen of Insects, the Plague Monarch, uses 'Debuff: Paralysis Poison' to alleviate your pain.]

Queresha also tried to protect Suho in her own way. In any case, since Suho was their priest, they had to somehow prevent him from being burned to death by Antares. And yet...

[Cease! You shameless bastards!]

**Fire!**

At the roar of Antares, all those protections burned to the point of futility and disappeared. Antares' anger was directed not only to Suho, but also to other monarchs by his side.

[To think that the one who should have reigned over beings like him chose to submit. All of you no longer have the right to inherit the title of monarch!]

**FWOOSH!**

His flames deflected the winds of the grasslands and melted even the frigid blizzards. The illusions of the monarchs who helped protect them also scattered and disappeared like a haze.

'Cough!-' With all help gone, Suho literally fell into the middle of the hellfire pouring out from Antares with his bare body. Iron Body? The toughness skill, which only increases physical defense, was of no use in this situation. His HP level crashed towards the floor without a break. Even the use of potions was banned, so it was a hopeless situation altogether.

However...

**...Glub glub.**

For some time, no screams came out of Suho's mouth, which was buried in the hellfire.

[...Ha?]

At that moment, a different color appeared in Antares' eyes.

**Tap, tap.**

One step after another. Suho was slowly approaching Antares, walking on top of that inferno. Of course the pain was still there. His whole body was so hot that he felt like his heart would stop at any moment, nevertheless.

*'...This is nothing.'*

Change of plan. Suho gritted his teeth with an expression of utmost stubbornness and raised his fist, forcibly holding back the screams that were about to burst out. *'I will kill you before I die.'*

[Ha?]

The moment when Antares let out a laugh at such a nonsensical statement.

['Skill: Giant's Armor' is used.]

['Skill: Rigid body' is used.]

**Bulk!**

Suho, who raised the black energy with full power, gradually grew in size and—

**Bang-!**

Suho's fist exploded. Antares' huge body staggered.

[?!]

For the first time, a look of bewilderment passed in Antares' eyes. The second that came after, Antares laughed, in a truly refreshing way.

[ha ha ha... Hahahahahahaha!]

He, who was riding on a huge berserker in human form, put his hand on his forehead and burst into madness for a long time. As if there was mana in his voice, Suho's heart thumped along with the sound of laughter.

Silence. The moment his laughter stopped. Antares looked down at Suho with an arrogant smile on his vertically slit pupils.

[How amusing.]

Indeed, he said with an expression as if he had found an interesting toy after a long time.

[Let's entertain ourselves then, shall we?]

**RWA!**

The huge berserk dragon's mouth opened to chew and swallow the toy.



**BITE!**

Suho was devoured in one bite. 'Keuk-' Suho managed to support himself with his arms and legs spread out in the huge mouth. And finally, he succeeded in breaking his fangs with force.

**Crack!**

[Ah! How dare this insect-!]

*'Insect?'* Suho seemed to like the tone of those words, and said with a smirk. *'If I'm an insect then why don't I give you a dose of my poison?'*

**Slam!**

He slammed down the Dragon Emperor's fangs, which he had mercilessly broken. Then, the countless deadly poisons contained in that attack exploded all at once.

[Use 'Debuff: Paralysis Poison'.]

[Use 'Debuff: Kasaka's Poison'.]

...

[Oh you dare-!]

Venom. Suho hit the roof of his mouth several times with the most ferocious expression on his face.

**Bang! Crack! 꺾Bang bang bang!**

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch uses 'Skill: Breath of Destruction'.]

**...ROAR!**

A fierce flame boiled in Antares' throat. It was not enough to burn Suho's poison energy, but it was just right to burn Suho's body burnt black. Even so—

*'I'm not dead yet.'*

**Crack!**

[?!]

Even in that excruciating pain, Suho managed to break one more of his fangs. And, using the fangs as a weapon, rather than avoiding the breath of destruction, he chose to plunge it into its throat.

**Kwak!**

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Then, in between, his fangs stabbed mercilessly, and the breath of destruction that flowed through his throat exploded in the middle.

**Kwang-!**

[Aaaaaaaagh!]

Antares struggled, shaking his head mercilessly from side to side. The impact of the breath of destruction exploding inside his body was more tremendous than he could have imagined. But Suho didn't stop there, he raised his fist and struck down the stuck fangs like nails.

**¡Bang bang bang- tear!**

He pierced a hole in the giant light dragon's neck, opened the hole with both hands, and forcibly tore it apart.

**¡Fwoosh!**

Antares' throat split as if it had been cut by a sword, and dragon blood gushed out like a fountain.

[AAAH!]

The sound of Antares' screams resonating throughout the sky was exhilarating. But Suho knew that he couldn't defeat Antares with just this amount of attack. Suho was also at his limit now. His HP was also showing the bottom, and he was losing his mind as if he would faint at any moment.

In a desperate moment '!!!' Suddenly, Suho had an idea.

*'Dragon! How about I make another suggestion.'*

[Aaaaaaaagh!]

*'I won't become your priest anymore.'*

Whether Antares listened or not, Suho said what he had to say.

*'I will be your successor.'*

[...what?]

Antares, struggling with anger and anguish, doubted his ears. *'Because Ragnar is my pet, he is not qualified for the title. But what about me?'* If the meaning of 'Dragon Emperor' is the King of dragons. *'I'm also the owner of a dragon.'*

[!!!]

The power of this insanely powerful Monarch, when Suho experienced it at first hand, how could he not become covetous?

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*'I will become the Monarch of Destruction.'*

# 197

[...]

Antares was silent for a moment after hearing what Suho shouted.

[...Ha.]

Until a laugh finally escaped his mouth.

[Hehehe... Hahahahaha!]

His maddening laughter shook the heavens.

[Did you say you would become the Monarch of Destruction now? How dare a mere human, who is not even a dragon themselves!?!]

**FWOOM!!**

Antares. He was a Monarch of destruction in the true sense of the word, who enjoyed bloody battles and felt complete bliss only on the battlefield. He thought he would never be able to fight again because he was trapped in a distant death, so he tried to enjoy the fight a little more after a long time. Right now, all excitement has gone cold because of the arrogant words spoken by the insignificant worm.

[Perish, child of shadow.]

—————!

In a second, doom descended.

**Kwah Kwah Kwah Kwah Kwah!**

*'jKeuk!'*

Bubbling lava. The huge dragon that was bleeding from Suho's attack turned into bubbling lava and swallowed Suho. As if all the battles up until now had been a joke. The unbearable murderous intent wanted to obliterate Suho. But then—

-Alright, Suho.

From somewhere far away, a voice came like a light breeze.

- I know what you mean.

?!

Despite being extremely calm, it was a low voice that made anyone cry the moment they heard it.

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[This, this?!]

At that voice, Antares was more taken aback than Suho.

**Flash!**

A light appeared. 'Ah...' At the same time, the fire that burned Suho's entire body faded in an instant. Every flame in sight began to perish. Afterwards what filled the place was the pitch-black darkness itself.

[...Ha ha ha ha ha! I see! So it was like that as well!]

Antares, noticing something in the sudden unexpected situation, laughed madly. It was a laugh that was somewhat relieved, welcoming, and at the same time filled with extreme rage.

**Shuaaa**

Where all the heat had once been, darkness fell upon it. Suho stood on his own two feet in the pitch black darkness. And Antares, who had transformed into a human form, landed in front of him.

[Yes, I thought it was strange from the beginning.]

His arrogant gaze calmly scanned Suho's figure. A pitiful face was burned pitch-black by the breath of destruction. It's obvious that Suho's physical condition had already been as good as that of a corpse for a long time. The fact that he can stand on two legs like this is a miracle itself. Nevertheless... Suho's eyes, which received Antares's gaze directly, were still burning like an unquenchable flame. But at this moment Antares was seeing something completely different through Suho's childish eyes.

Yes. Those eyes. The existence of a familiar shadow hung over those eyes was similar to **'him'**.

*Tsk.*

[Of course, no matter the state of my spirit, there is no way this youngster's power could reach me.]

Antares clicked his tongue and lashed out at **'him'**.

[So don't hide, show yourself!]

**Flash!**

**'!!!'**

Before he finished, Suho opened his eyes wide as he suddenly saw the inventory window open by itself. An item that had been quietly stored inside suddenly glowed and protruded out.

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## **Ding!**

[Item: Javier's Soul Stone]

Difficulty to obtain: ??

Type: Jewelry

A jewel made by compressing demonic spirits. Javier's Soulstone. An unidentified item left by Javier in Haeundae, Busan.

And this thing...

*-It's a safety measure just in case, so put it in your inventory.*

... It was something left for Suho before Sung Jin-Woo's illusion disappeared.

*"Safety measure?"*

*-Yes. Seeing how you fight... There is something I'm concerned about.*

## **T-ring!**

[Item: Javier's Soul Stone' is activated.]

## **Shing!**

'Ah!' Suho saw it. A shaman's circle of demons extending from Javier's soul stone in all directions. The black energy radiating out through the shaman circle, united as one.

**\*Summon.\***

'He' reappeared in front of Suho.

'!!!!' The moment I saw that firm and solid back. Suho's eyes couldn't help but widen.

*¿Dad?!*

-This is quite troublesome. But it held up just fine.

Sung Jin-Woo turned his head slightly and looked back at Suho. What he saw, with a faint smile on his lips, was Suho's stamina bar.

[HP: 1/67,340]

Only 1.

For a long time, Suho's stamina didn't drop further than 1 as he was holding on steadfastly. It was thanks to the incantation that Sung Jin-Woo had carved into Javier's soul stone. Sung Jin-Woo, who appeared here, was only an illusion in his memory, not his real body, so it was impossible to exert any real influence in reality. But in a place like this, it was different.

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-It was worthwhile to squeeze out the souls of the Demon Tribe as much as possible.

Sung Jin-Woo's welcome allowed the last remnants of himself to permeate Javier's soul stone, which had been scattered in Busan.

Sung Jin-Woo, who looked at Suho's complexion, returned to the front again. The moment he met Antares' gaze in front of him, his eyes flashed terrifyingly.

-Yeah, if you're the guy I know, I'd think it would be something like this.

[Long time no see. How have you been?]

Antares even recalled a calm smile on his lips and talked to Sung Jin-Woo. However, there was more vicious energy than ever in those eyes than he had ever seen. With the momentum to run towards Sung Jin-Woo right away. Sung Jin-Woo knew Antares' personality better than anyone else. So he had no choice but to worry about his son, Suho, who was out there claiming to be the priest of dead monarchs. Unbeknownst to the others, Antares was a fierce brawler who spoke only through violence. All he cares about is fighting and fighting and annihilating his enemies. True to his name, the Monarch of Destruction, he was a being who pursued true destruction.

[Your son is terrible. I've been dealing with him for a while. Did peaceful times weaken the Shadow Monarch's blood?]

- But he still gave you a hard time, right?

[Your sorcery must have had an effect. Did you learn the witchcraft of the Demonic Tribe? Since when did a man whose name is the Shadow Monarch start to perform tricks like this?]

-Ah, originally, educating children is always a series of learning.

Sung Jin-Woo shrugged and spread his hands.

-Thank you anyway. Thanks to you, I had a pretty good outcome.

[What?]

A new shaman formation spread over the palm of his hand.

**Woosh.**

**Shoom shoom shoom!**

The shaman circle went round and round, until a system message arrived in front of Suho.

**T-ring!**

[Title: One who overcame adversity' has been acquired.]

*'This is...'*

[Title: One who overcame adversity]

A title given to those who successfully overcome adversity. Ability increases in proportion to lost HP.

(1% stat per 1% missing health)

A buff that raises your stats by a percentage whenever your HP is reduced. This was a title Sung Jin-Woo earned a long time ago while clearing a job change quest. But Suho was different. It was an achievement that could never be achieved in the system for Suho, who could not receive the job change quest no matter how much he leveled up. However, if this condition was achieved, it was not very difficult to manipulate the system and have it hand it over directly from Sung Jin-Woo.

### **Whoop!**

The moment the title effect was applied, Suho's body, which was in a dying state, suddenly overflowed with power.

[And what do you propose we do now?]

Antares frowned at the sudden appearance of Sung Jin-Woo. In his mind, he wanted to fight him at once since he hadn't seen him in a while, but that was impossible. Sung Jin-Woo's current condition was just an illusion. It was also an illusion surrounded by the witchcraft of the demons who deal with the soul of the Monarch, so there was no way a proper battle was possible. Especially in this world of death, his existence was no different from a foul.

*'Father...'* At that time, Suho, who finally came back to his senses with strength, blinked at his father. Sung Jin-Woo reached out and tousled his son's hair, answering Antares' question.

- Well, how about normal career counseling?

The face of Sung Jin-Woo, showed nothing but pride and joy towards him.

-My son has finally decided on his own career path, so, shouldn't I help him a little as a father?

As if baptizing, Sung Jin-Woo spread his magic while placing his hand on Suho's head. and asked

-Suho, isn't that right? The purpose of the level-up system from the beginning was to grow the human body and make it into a vessel for the monarch. In my case, it was the 'Shadow Monarch', but it is also possible to replace the title with that of another Monarch. However...

*'...'* Suho knew what his father was going to say.

- The process will never be easy. Even today, if I hadn't been here, I wouldn't have been able to guarantee your outcome. Are you sure about this then? Are you really prepared to become the Destruction Monarch?



*'Yes. I'm prepared.'* Seeing his father's concern for him, Suho swallowed his dry saliva and nodded resolutely. *'And in order to ask the location of the World Tree, I had to meet the Dragon Emperor anyways.'*

-The World Tree? Are you trying to create the Holy Water of Life?

Why is it that all of a sudden Sung Jin-Woo was able to infer many things just by hearing the word World Tree? However, Suho's reply made even Sung Jin-Woo, who had assumed the number of all cases, be at a loss.

*'Grandpa is in danger.'*

-!!!

Sung Jin-Woo's expression hardened after hearing the circumstances from Suho. He also made a determined expression and manipulated the shaman formation that was engraved on Suho's head.

-Hmm. I get it. then... I'd love to help you do this and the former quest but—

[Hold on for a moment you—]

-No, not now, this is more important.

[...]

Antares, who had been listening to the conversation between father and son from behind, frowned at the strange situation.

[Can't you use a doctor for that?]

- Antares.

Sung Jin-Woo, who completed the shaman formation, said:

-I also know that my son's vessel is far from sufficient to inherit your power. Not even dragon's power in the first place. So let me make a suggestion.

[A proposal?]

-Yes. You are so bored here after dying, don't you miss the times when you reeked chaos everywhere in the living realm?

[...What are you suggesting?]

At Sung Jin-Woo's words, Antares' brow furrowed. However, Sung Jin-Woo knew Antares' personality better than anyone else. The true embodiment of destruction. He was a fierce fighting maniac who felt the joy of life only in bloody battles. He could be sure that he would not reject his offer.

**Grin.**

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Sung Jin-Woo reached out to the Dragon Emperor and made an offer he could not refuse.

-Ragnar. I will give you the body of Suho's dragon subordinate.

[!!!]

-Come back to life, Antares.

At that moment, a contract has been signed.

**T-ring!**

[The job change quest has arrived.]

# 198

¡Whoosh!

"It's Suho!"

[Kieeeeeek! Little Lord!]

Time that had stood still moved again. In an instant, Suho's eyes bounced back to reality as he saw people running towards him, worrying about him. Grandpa and Beru were the first. Beyond that, Ammut, even the others, were looking at him with a bewildered expression. They had to be. Suddenly, a shimmering fire rose from Suho's whole body. As it turned out, it wasn't just a vision in the eyes of Suho, but rather an actual fire caused by Antares.

**Fwaa!**

"¡AGHH!"

Suho collapsed on the spot with tremendous pain. The flames that covered his body soon turned into smoke and cooled down, but Suho's HP was still on the verge of dying. However this was reality, and there was a way to solve it.

"Accept Status Recovery!"

With a **flash!** Suho's moribund condition was quickly restored, as if he had leveled up.

"Suho! Are you okay?!"

"Hah.... Yes, I'm fine."

Suho stood up and swept down his chest as he was supported back up by Sung-Il-Hwan. *'It's good I didn't spend my daily quest rewards.'* Dodged a bullet with that. The reward was still there, thanks to the recent resolution of the aftereffects of steel exercise with bandages and potions.

"You overdid it, didn't you?"

"No, I didn't. For a moment... I did get to meet the Destruction Monarch."

[Kieeek?! You actually met the Dragon Emperor?! Potions! We need more potions!]

"No, I'm okay now."

Beru freaked out, twirling around the body of Suho to see how he was doing. On the other hand, as soon as Arsha heard the word dragon, she immediately fled.

Ammut stared at Suho's figure with intrigue. How pitiful. Even though his health had been restored, the clothes he was wearing had been burned into rags by the flames of the dragon. Ammut bared his teeth and chuckled.

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[If you had come face to face with the dead Dragon Emperor, it would be a stroke of luck that you came back alive and safe like this. So, did he tell you where you can find the World Tree?]

"Yes, about the World Tree..."

Suho smiled wryly as he remembered what his father had said.

*-Suho, I can tell you the location of the World Tree. But it won't be easy.*

It wasn't just Antares who wandered through the dimensional cracks during the war, but so did Sung Jin-Woo. Unfortunately, even if he knew the location of the World Tree, he couldn't teach Suho the shortcut.

*- Standing in front of the World Tree at your current level will only make it dangerous for you. So for now, start with your strength.*

In the past, Sung Jin-Woo had obtained the "Fragment of the World Tree" as a trophy for hunting Volkan in the Demon Castle. But that was entirely the result of the system's arrangements, something that Suho doesn't have right now. In the end, Suho had to find the real World Tree -not a fragment of the World Tree- on his own.

*-The rest of Antares will tell you from the sidelines.*

With that, Sung Jin-Woo touched the system and created a new quest for protection.

Suho raised his eyes and stared at the quest window in front of him.

[The previous quest has arrived.]

[Would you like to accept the previous quest?]

(Y/N)

**Gulp.**

Suho's throat rang out. Yes or No kept flickering in front of him. His heart was pounding. How could it not? The former quest that he couldn't even expect in his life has finally appeared. The process was also the result of his own search and victory.

*'Accept.'*

**T-ring!**

[You've accepted the previous quest.]

At the same time that he decided to accept the quest, the quest window opened up in his sight.

[Ex-Quest: The Draconic Trials-1]

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[Antares, the King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, laughs at your weakness. If your weak body were to accept the power of the Dragon Emperor now, you would burn into a handful of ashes. Satisfy the minimum qualifications to become the successor of the Destruction Monarch.]

[- Objective: To reach the required level of 99.]

*'Level 99.'*

Suho seemed to know how this standard was set.

From the 'dream' that he had when he was an adolescent.

At that time, he had been fighting endlessly with his father's Shadow Legion, including Beru, to level up. *'When I think about it now, everyone was examining me as I fought.'* But at the time, he didn't even realize what they had seen in him, since the road was so rough and bloody. Mountains over mountains. He made a range of carcasses from so many giants and dragons, while following a long path through the open field until the highest level was reached.

[Level: 99]

That was the end of it. After that, no matter how many battles he went through and how much he became more adept at wielding his powers, he could never move on to the next level. As if the level 100 level does not exist. So at the time, he simply thought that level 99 was the end. *But what if that's not...* Suho realized. *'...my limit.'*

*Haha.*

Suho bared his teeth and laughed, feeling a simmering sense of triumph. *'Okay, let's start here, right?'*

Suddenly:

"Beep?" At this moment, the little lizard, which was still sitting calmly in the guardian's hand, made a sound. Ragnar. A baby dragon that had just been born from an egg was staring at Suho, his round eyes squinting with a dumbfounded expression.

"...Let's ask the Dragon Emperor about the rest."

"Beep?"

Suho clutched Ragnar's small body and made eye contact. The contract that went back and forth between Sung Jin-Woo and Antares. It was a condition that was put forward in place of making Suho the successor of the Dragon Emperor, but it was also a necessary step towards it. In order for there to be an heir to the power, of course a "priest" is also needed to carry out the procedure. Therefore, if Suho is the successor of the Dragon Emperor, then Ragnar is the priest.

"Open your eyes, Antares."

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"Beep?"

Before the words of Suho fell, a great spirit began to dwell in Ragnar's small body.

**¡Whaaaaaaaaa!**

[The spirit body of Antares is being incorporated into the body of the Priest.]

In a moment, Ragnar's eyes deepened as he rolled his eyeballs with a dumbfounded expression. His gaze stared blankly into the air, and the dragon muttered.

"...What a strange ceiling."

When he opened his eyes, an unfamiliar place appeared before him .

**Badum. Badum. Badum. Badum.**

The sound of a heart beating wildly deep inside a small body. His noble blood flowed without hesitation through each vein and vessel around him at the same rhythm. And...

**Ah\*\*\*-pew.\*\*\***

The first breath. His chest swelled and the fresh air he inhaled seeped into his lungs. All of this was evidence. *'Ah. Finally,'* he understood. He was convinced. Antares was truly alive again.

"Uh-huh... Ha Ha!"

Antares burst into a mad with pure joy.

"Haha! I'm back! This Emperor has overcome even death and returned from the sea after death! MUAHAHAHA!"

**!!!**

Everyone in the shadow dungeon shuddered at the aura of the dragon in that wild laughter.

"Ah! This power it can't be—"

Sung Il-Hwan was prepared to instinctively draw the power of the cracks even if he put himself at a risk.

[Dra- Dragon Emperor?!]

Even Ammut was nervous, and he managed to control gravity to the highest degree.

**Kugugugooogoo!**

[Kieeeeeeeeeeeek!]

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Beru, who had fought countless wars with the Denizens of Chaos led by the Dragons long ago, reacted more fiercely than anyone else.

[Let go of your hand young liege! I will protect you!]

Antares was overjoyed with their response.

"Hah! Yes, cower in terror and reverence!" *Whoever you might be.*

The 'first monarch' and the 'strongest monarch' born out of the darkness. He is the king who reigns over all the dragons, and is a symbol of terror and destruction. Everyone who knew him called him "Dragon Emperor" with the utmost fear and respect. "The burden is the solvent antares."

!!!

At the declaration that flowed from the mouth of Antares, everyone except Suho prepared for a showdown. There's only one reason why they couldn't release their power towards him. Because he was now in the hands of Suho.

But not for long.

Antares escaped from Suho's hands and jumped down. Then, slowly, he raised himself, overcame death, and took his first great step as a monarch who returned from the sea after death.

**Hoh!**

"Uh-huh. It truly is a body worthy of being called Kamish's hatchling."

Antares couldn't hide his satisfaction as he fidgeted his short legs. Born as a dragon for the 2nd time. If it weren't for a great being like himself, what kind of dragon in the world could walk so skillfully as soon as it was born from an egg? In fact, the principle is simple. Spread your little wings wide to get a sense of balance. Support the body with the tail so that it does not fall backwards.

**Pat-pat.**

Of course, he still didn't have enough muscle strength so his legs were shaking incessantly just by standing on his own two feet.

"It's as simple as using mana." Antares skillfully drew magic from Ragnar's heart, and again vigorously.

**Fwuaaa!**

"Hahahaha! Have you seen it! What a joy! I'm going to live a second life in this newborn hatchling's body!"

Antares shuddered with tremendous anticipation. In his previous life, he had already reached a supreme level that no one dared to climb. Its power was so extreme that it was no longer

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possible to grow. But with all that experience and talent, he was given the opportunity to grow up again from the time he was a baby hatchling! It's his second dragon life!

But then, reality struck.

"MUAHAHAHA!-- Beep?"

Antares' eyes, which had been smiling as he radiated a murderous momentum everywhere, suddenly became dumbfounded.

**T-ring!**

[Ragnar's magic power has been depleted.]

[The spirit body of Antares inside the Priest's is being removed.]

"Beep? Bleep?" Ragnar tilted his head, looking as if he didn't know anything. Suddenly, he realized that so many people were surrounding him, spewing tremendous amounts of mana. He shook again, crying like a newborn baby.

"B-BWUAAAAAAAAAA!"

"....."

[.....]

Everyone was silent. It seems as though something amazing just happened in a flash. Without saying a word, Suho picked up the weeping Ragnar again and patted him on the back. Well, he felt like he had to soothe the crying child for now.

There, there...

"Piyoo." Only then does Ragnar feel relieved and close his eyes to fall back asleep. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief at that uselessly cute appearance.

Meanwhile, from a distant world, Suho could hear someone's annoyance directed at him.

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is furious that this is a fraud.]

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is thinking about how to increase Ragnar's mana.]

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, wants to advise you about Ragnar's parenting methods....]



# 199

Around the same time Suho hatched Ragnar and was struggling against the Dragon Emperor, American society was facing a great shock.

-Thomas Andre murdered Christopher Reed?!

-Oh my God!

- The curiosity of people who have been wondering who is stronger out of the two has finally been resolved!

-But it shouldn't have been like this!

For some reason, two S-rank hunters representing the United States fought for their lives, and as a result, the consequences were not only just a matter of murder. The death of an S-rank Hunter was truly an astronomical loss for the United States. However, the bigger problem was that the person who committed this shocking crime was also an S-rank himself.

-Hold all the blame on Thomas Andre and put him to death!

- Hey, buddy. We've already lost one S-rank Hunter, and you're asking to kill another? Are you thinking of ruining America?

-You don't really think that such a thing is possible, do you?

-Thomas Andre is quietly under arrest for now, but if he suddenly has a change of heart, at least half the American population will die.

- But since Thomas admitted his crimes, hasn't he been arrested by the Federal Bureau?

-Arrest? You don't seriously consider that an arrest, do you? Didn't you see the picture of the Goliath stopping at a burger joint on the way to his arrest?!

The disposition of Thomas Andre was hotly debated among Americans. But there was one fact they all acknowledged. No matter how much Thomas Andre was charged for murder, it was a fact that the United States would never be safe economically and physically if he was touched. Furthermore, there was also something that Americans were most curious about.

-So, where is the Federal Bureau confining Thomas Andre?

- It's in 'Area-51' right?

- Yeah, Area-51, that's the only place he has to be in, no?

Area 51. A first-class military base managed by the US Department of Defense located in the desert of Nevada, USA. Originally, this place was built as a thoroughly secret base for the development and testing of new weapons. In the meantime, the US government has consistently refused to answer questions about this place, but eventually acknowledged the

reality of this area with the release of 355 pages of classified documents from the CIA. However, the reason why this secret base was particularly interesting to people was because of the lush rumors about this area.

Inside, aliens are secretly imprisoned and living organisms are being experimented on!

Area 51 was full of all sorts of ugly and mysterious rumors, such as recovering the remains of a UFO and conducting joint research with aliens. And in fact, with the opening of the Hunter era, Area 51 was also an area that was incorporated under the Federal Bureau and used in many ways. So, people guessed that the only place where Thomas Andre could be accommodated was Area 51.

However, logic and truth are very different.

“One more drink.”

“Yes Mr. Thomas, how much ice would you like in your drink?” **Clank**\*\*. \*\* The bartender, who was setting a large ice cube in a clear wine glass, glanced at Thomas Andre.

“Hey, Adam! Would you like a drink too?”

“Thank you, but I'll have to reject it, I'm still in my working hours.”

Adam White, the director of the Federal Bureau of Hunters— who had just entered the mansion— smiled bitterly at Thomas Andre, who was drunk and waving at him. Yes, this extravagant mansion was a 'prison' specially prepared for Thomas Andre by the Federal Bureau. It's a prison, so to speak, but it's actually more like a resort. Thomas Andre, who was caught as a criminal, was also enjoying a leisurely vacation at the swimming pool, wearing a colorful floral short-sleeved tee and shorts, not a prison uniform at all.

Thomas Andre, clearly aware of Adam White's position, asked him with a single smile. “So, how is my trial going? Will I get the death penalty?”

“Stop joking around and let's talk about work.” Adam White sighed and ordered the accompanying secretaries to lay out the research materials in front of him.

Seeing the amount of data, Thomas Andre raised one eye and his eyes lit up. “Hoo? Were there too many?”

“Yes. It was as you said.”

The previous day, the director of the Federal Bureau, Adam White, heard the real reason Thomas Andre killed Christopher Reed, and immediately launched an investigation into the Foreign Religion. Although the public opinion was leaning toward Thomas Andre— who was usually known for his filthy personality— to have killed Christopher Reed in a fit of anger, Adam White was quite relieved to learn that the truth was different.

“...It turns out that far more Foreign believers are active all over the United States than I thought.” Foreign Religion. An unknown pseudo-religion of unknown origin. “Surprisingly,

when I investigated, their goals and actions were quite moderate compared to other pseudo-religions. At best, they would propagate or sell Stardust.”

“I guessed the same. After all, the goal must have been to stay quietly hidden. So, did you recover the Stardust and Star Pieces?”

“Yes. All visible kin have been retrieved. There was no justification for arresting them, so the solution was to buy them all with money. Surveillance was attached separately.”

“Haha, man you really are good at your job!”

“...”

Thomas Andre raised his wine glass in the air, as if toasting, and drank it down. Seeing this, Adam White's subordinates couldn't help but cry. It was incredibly unpleasant to see Adam White, the director of the Federal Bureau of Hunters, being treated as if he were a mere subordinate. But what if you are offended? Thomas Andre, That man had the qualifications and strength to do so. Even Adam White himself seemed to have no feelings for this disrespectful attitude towards him. Rather, at the point when he learned that there was an unidentified group working secretly in the United States, Thomas' help was more desperate than ever for the peace of the United States.

“Back then... You told me the magic restraints don't work on you anymore.”

“Ah, that's right.”

At Adam White's words, Thomas Andre shrugged his shoulders carefreely. Right now Thomas Andre's both wrists and ankles were filled with magic restraints used to arrest the villains. Those handcuffs were developed by the Korean Hunter Association, and we're a great invention widely used around the world. However, during the arrest process, Thomas Andre obediently put on that restraint, and despite this, his magic was still flowing through his body.

“Didn't I tell you? I can absorb the mana of outer space. And this magic restraint tool doesn't work on outer space mana. Similarly, it won't work for Stardust boosters or Foreign believers.”

“...And you said the one that shared all this information with you was the Korean Hunter Sung Suho?”

“Hehe, yup. He has a very promising future ahead.”

“If someone sees your expression now, they will think he is your secret love child.”

“Oh, it's similar. He is the son of my old best friend.”

Adam White shook his head at the sight of Thomas Andre smiling proudly at the memory of Sung Suho. He was just frustrated. It was the first time he felt so helpless after becoming the director of the Federal Bureau of Hunters that protects the United States. “I am very sorry to say this, but I feel quite nervous. What the hell is going *on* on Earth right now?”

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"A space war, duh."

"Ha..." Adam White, who could neither believe nor disbelieve that absurd statement, simply raised his forehead and sighed. Even after saying that, he felt even more sickened when he saw the carefree look of Thomas, who was drinking to his heart's content.

"By the way, did you seek cooperation from the Korean Association?"

"Yes. I heard that the current president of the association is in North Korea, so I sent someone there."

"Good. It must be the president of the association. Our Suho told us to never trust other guys."

*...He is going to talk about Sung Suho again.*

"Oh, and do you have any high-level Essence Stones left in the Federal Bureau's warehouse? It would be nice if you could send all of them to our Suho. He says they need a lot of Essence Stones these days."

"...They are expensive."

"If this is about money, I have plenty."

"The auction price— Nevermind, I will see to it."

"Oh come on. Look at it this way, this is all for the earth. If the earth perishes, do you think our America will be alright? Oh and, if you don't have a few high-grade ones, feel free to collect intermediate Essence Stones instead."

"..."

At this point, aren't you just being a thug? First, it was a hamburger, but once they started listening to it, the staff of the FEderal Bureau couldn't hide their dejection at the sight of the super criminal who kept robbing them of their resources. And the more shameless that human being came out, the more curious everyone became. Just who the hell is the Korean hunter 'Sung Suho' whom the world's Thomas Andre so blatantly cherishes?

*'I guess I'll have to meet him in person. In any case, if Thomas Andre is being tricked by him, then this will cause a huge problem.'* It was Adam White, who was determined to schedule a visit to Korea sooner or later.

"Ah! And about our Suho..."

"..."

Please, shut up.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, Sung Il-Hwan, who had been missing all this time finally returned home safely. Park Kyung-Hye and Sung Jin-Ah, who were worried about him, barely regained their stability. Of course, that didn't solve all the problems. It remained unchanged that their precious family members, Sung Jin-Woo and Cha Hae-In, were still missing, and this incident forced them to worry even more than before. However, the solution to this was very simple.

Without hesitation, Suho used the key to the Shadow Dungeon on them.

“Ah!!”

“This memory?!--”

Park Kyung-Hye and Sung Jin-Ah, whose memories of their previous lives suddenly returned, were temporarily in great shock, but soon began to accept the whole truth. Suho honestly told them all about the whereabouts of Sung Jin-Woo and Cha Hae-In. Of course, that didn't mean all the worries were resolved, but at least it made it so that he didn't have to worry about keeping things vague as he had done up until now.

[My young liege, is it really okay to do this?]

Beru watched Suho's behavior from the sidelines and showed a little concern.

[If you indiscriminately return people's memories like this, the world could become confused.]

Of course, when Sung Jin-Woo handed over the key to the Shadow Dungeon to Suho, he did not give specific instructions on how to use it. At least, he gave advice that it would be good to bring back Yoo Jin-Ho's memories, which can provide the most practical help to Suho, but the rest was entirely up to Suho's choice. Even so, if everyone's memories were returned indiscriminately, there would be those who would use those memories to do bad things, and worse, be tempted by the Itarim. However, Suho boldly dismissed Beru's concerns.

"So what if it's reckless?"

[Kiek?]

“I can't keep letting my family grieve for my father who they don't know whenever he is still alive or dead. Besides...”

Suho looked at Beru with serious eyes. Those two irises were burning hotter than ever.

“...In the first place, I don't like the fact that the world has forgotten all about my father. If I can, I want to make everyone in the world remember my father again, but I'm holding back.”

[...]

Beru, feeling Suho's sincerity, had no choice but to keep his mouth shut. As he said, the people of this world have completely forgotten that Sung Jin-Woo saved the earth a long time ago. Although not everyone can appreciate his noble sacrifice, it is Suho's wish that

someone could at least remember. While saying this, Suho thought about the fight he had with the Dragon Emperor a few moments ago.

*'Ever since I was little, I've always been curious. How did the burn marks on my father's hands come about?'* The breath of destruction exhaled by the Dragon Emperor. It was Suho who vaguely realized the greatness of his father, who fought and won a war alone against that terribly dangerous being.

“So I...” Suho decided. “I will continue to make as many people as possible remember my father when the opportunity arises.” He realized. “No matter how much I think about it, that seems like the only *'gift'* I can prepare before going to see my father.”

[...]

Beru wept.

Yes.

Gift.

That day, when Suho met the apostle of Itarim for the first time, he had promised to himself since then, on what to do for his father.

Hot tears were flowing from Beru's eyes, he who had walked the road with Sung Jin-Woo for a long time, without any hesitation.

# 200

On the edge of the vast universe.

**Fooo...**

Against the enemies that melted the dimensional walls and poured out endlessly, fierce battles were taking place all over the universe.

But in the middle of that battlefield.

**Smirk.**

"...I didn't expect for my son to become the heir of the Dragon Emperor." Said the man with a black aura draped in the form of a veil. The Shadow Monarch, Sung Jin-Woo, was staring in the direction of the Earth and smiling.

Really, raising children seems to be a series of things that you can't anticipate at all. Who would have dared to imagine? The day will come when the son of the Shadow Monarch declares himself to be the heir of the Monarch of Destruction. This was certainly a future that none of the great beings here had ever contemplated. As such, Suho's decision this time was a risky adventure with many variables, and an uncertain future... But...

[Can we be sure to leave it as it is?]

[The Destruction Monarch has never been reliable.]

[It is also ominous to be reawakening monarchs who were born out of primordial darkness in the first place.]

[In the worst case scenario, you are nurturing your own internal enemies during the war.]

Sung Jin-Woo just shrugged his shoulders as he watched the Rulers each of them express their concern to him.

"Well, guess what? It's a decision he made on his own, and as a father, I can't help but support him."

However, Sung Jin-Woo had decided to put all those worries behind him and respect his son's decision. "Of course, there's still an element of anxiety, but that's the first time I've had one as a father in a long time." Plus, if you think about it, it wasn't a bad choice. "...No, it might be rather good if it goes well." To a certain extent, the Rulers agreed with Sung Jin-Woo's idea.

[He's right.]

[The more someone inherits the power of the dead monarchs, the greater our power will be.]

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[Even though monarchs are born out of primordial darkness, they are still on the same side when it comes to dealing with enemies in outer space.]

[Of course, the fundamental nature of wanting destruction won't change much, but if your son can control that instinct...]

"That's it for small talk."

A towering presence appeared.

"It's coming again." In an instant, Sung Jin-Woo's eyes burned coldly when he found the crack that had opened again in front of him.

[Gather all the lines!]

[A new gate has spawned!]

[Scramble the whole army!]

With a **FLASH!**

At the command of the Rulers, the soldiers of heaven flew up in unison. Splendid wings spread. The power of brilliance and the aura of the outer beings clashed with each other. And in the center of it, Sung Jin-Woo bared his teeth fiercely, unleashing the monarch's realm.

"Arise, everyone."

**WUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!**

[This time, our troops will be in the vanguard!]

[No! Legion Commander Igris! Follow Me!]

At the Monarch's command, the Shadow Soldiers, who were healing from their wounds in a flash of black steam, rushed into battle.

[Come to us as much as you like!]

[The Monarch's protection is with us!]

As long as they were protected by the shadows, they were an immortal army that would never die, even if they were hurt.

**RWAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!**

In the vastness of space, above the deep and wide shadow of the Monarch, the army of immortality roared like thunder.

In the midst of the war, Sung Jin-Woo turned his gaze back and muttered to his son, who was struggling alone in the beyond.



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'Suho. My son.' I respect your choice. Since you have chosen to be the successor of the Dragon Emperor yourself... 'Be strong.'

You have to be strong.

'The Draconic Trials' It wasn't just a quest. Coincidentally, it served as a mutual agreement that was only possible because the desires of Antares and the goals of Suho were looking in the same direction. At the same time, it was a risky deal that could quickly throw the balance out at any moment when there was a conflict of interest.

'So, Suho. If you do not overcome the Draconic Trials, the Dragon will eventually try to eat you.'

Sung Jin-Woo gritted his teeth and blessed Suho's future with concern.

'Be strong, Suho.' Be strong, and eat the Dragon instead.

In order to survive you must not be the prey.

'For you are a Hunter.'

\* \* \*

[Use Skill: 'Monarch's Domain'.]

**Rwaaaaaaa!**

Above the realm of the Monarch unfolded by Suho, the Shadow Soldiers roared in unison and sprang forward.

"Ahhhh!!"

"Ack! Ghuk!"

As they passed, only the blood and screams of the magic beasts overflowed.

[You have leveled up!]

[You have leveled up!]

Suho was hell-bent on entering the dungeons and leveling up as much as possible these days. Finishing the first trial, reaching level 99, was an easy but difficult goal. As the levels increased, the proportional amount of experience required increased, and it was natural for the speed to slow down. In the end, this meant that in order to level up faster, one would have to search for much more dangerous and powerful beasts. But that was easier said than done.

"Do-Gyun *hyung*, where is the next dungeon?"

"Yes boss! These are all for today. I'll make a reservation for the next dungeon as soon as possible."

At some point, it became natural for Lim Do-Gyun to refer to Suho as his boss, regardless of his age.

He had to, Lim Do-Gyun was the only "normal human" who watched Suho attack the dungeon with tremendous speed and momentum from beginning to end. A homage beyond wonder! Suho's Shadow Soldiers were not only quick to hunt, but also quick to mine and dismantle the carcasses of demons. Sometimes, the shadow of the magic beast that Suho had just killed would raise itself, and he would even dismantle his own body and offer it to Suho. It was a relief that the sight of the magic beast itself was horrible. Had they been human the scene would have been grotesque, horrifying even. And for Lim Do-Gyun, who was seeing it all firsthand, he could no longer regard Suho as just a close brother as before.

So, what is the true nature of his feelings for Suho? Fear? Oh no.

'Content.' Lim Do-Gyun thought sincerely. *'This is my job for life!'* The work is easy, and his life is not in danger. Even the salary is amazing! For an E-rank hunter like Lim Do-Gyun, the Woojin Guild was such a stable job that he wanted to bury his bones here for the rest of his life. As long as the boss Suho is there!

"Boss! I've got a dungeon reservation! It's a dungeon that the Hyunmoo Guild has failed to attack twice, so it can be a little dangerous, but—"

"It's good. Let's go right away."

The more dangerous the dungeon is, the better! With his eyes shining, he stepped forward, followed by Lim Do-Gyun vigorously, but then—

**Pause.**

"...Huh?"

"Ahk?!" When Suho stopped abruptly in front of him, Lim Do-Gyun, who had slammed into his hard back, grabbed his nose and stared at him.

"Boss, what's going on all of a sudden?"

"..." Suho suddenly stood there silently, with a troubled expression on his face. After staring into the air for a moment, Suho opened his mouth. "...Do-Gyun *hyung*, let's cancel that dungeon just now."

"Oh? Yes, I see. But why...?"

"I have to go for a while."

**Swish.**

Before those words were finished, Suho's new form disappeared from the spot.

"...Huh?" Lim Do-Gyun looked around with a puzzled expression, but he couldn't find Suho's figure anywhere. "Boss, while you leave to do that... Can I leave early?"

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\* \* \*

Ryo Singh.

He flew to India at the behest of Suho and headed straight to the Asura Guild without rest. "I need to see the Guildmaster right away! I've won a lot of business!"

Siddharth Bachchan.

The purpose for which Ryo Singh wanted to meet Siddharth Bachchan, the Guildmaster of the Asura Guild and the most famous S-rank hunter in India, was none other than the business proposed by Suho. Spring Water of the Echo Forest. Trading rights for the hottest item in the hunter industry these days, the Scavengers' Guild's Purifying Potion! The future ahead of Ryo Singh, who had won the enormous deal himself, was indeed solid. *'This time I'll definitely get a promotion! If the Guildmaster offers me the highest ransom as an A-list hunter, I will accept it unconditionally!'*

Ryo Singh slammed the door of the guild office with such an overwhelmed heart.

"...Huh?"

All of a sudden, an eerie atmosphere arrived.

He couldn't help but instinctively stop at the sight of the guild with a somewhat unpleasant air around. *'What is going on?'* At first, he tried to blame it on his mood. After a long absence, he had returned to his home country and visited the guild, so it was natural for one to feel unfamiliar. In addition, the guild employees who can be seen here and there are also working in the office as usual.

*'Still, what the hell is this feeling? It's as if something has changed.'* As Ryo Singh walked towards the Guildmaster's office, he couldn't shake his reluctance as he looked at people's faces.

Just then did he discover something strange.

*'They're unreadable.'* No matter how much they were overwhelmed by work, there wasn't a single emotion shown on the employees' faces. *'And no one welcomed me first.'* No matter how many times he traveled outside, there were quite a few employees who knew his face well. One of them recognized him and greeted him, but no one approached to talk to him.

"...This is Ryo Singh. I'm here to see the Guildmaster."

"Oh, yes."

When he approached someone, they responded with no expression. All of them reacted as if their souls had slipped out of their minds somewhere. "I contacted the Guildmaster's office before I came here, but he didn't answer the phone because he was busy. Is he not in the guild right now?"

"No."

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"So, where is he? Perhaps in a dungeon?"

"Yes."

"...Is that the end of the explanation?"

"Yes."

"...?" At the disapproving response that kept coming back, Ryo Singh tilted his head in wonder. Why were all of their reactions like this? Has there been anything bad in the guild lately? Ryo Singh eventually had no choice but to go to the front of the Guildmaster's office and walk back in vain. Suddenly, he found something odd.

*'What are those necklaces?'* It was nothing special, but now that he began to notice it, he saw that all the members of the guild were wearing the same necklace, studded with large blue gems, and worn around the necks of both men and women.

"Hey, um, what's that necklace?"

"Oh! This necklace?"

"This necklace?"

*'Huh?'* Ryo Singh grabbed one of them and asked him about the necklace, only for everyone around him to suddenly turn their heads and look at Ryo Singh at the same time. All with a broad smile on their face.

"This necklace is a recently made employee ID that shows that you belong to the Asura Guild."

"Can I get you one?"

"No, I'll give it to you!"

"No, I'll—"

"Uh--?" Rio Singh was suddenly handed over a necklace here and there, and just as quickly they began to put the necklace around his neck.

The moment he had it on, "Rio Singh, the Guildmaster is calling for you."

"All of a sudden? But isn't he in a dungeon?"

"Yes, you have to enter the dungeon to meet the Guildmaster."

"Ah, well, I see. I just happened to bring a gift for the Guildmaster."

Rio Singh nodded, fiddling with the Purifying Potion he had been gifted by Suho. It was said to be a business sample, and Siddharth Bachchan was told that he should try it himself.

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"But what kind of dungeon is it? Is it so dangerous that even the Guildmaster has to step up and take care of it?" To Ryo Singh's question, the staff member went back to being expressionless and answered.

"Yes, the Guildmaster is attacking the dungeons of the Dragonfolk tribe these days."

"Dragon Folk?"

# 201

Dragonfolk<sup>(1)</sup>. It is a race that collectively refers to monsters that have the characteristics of a dragon [龍] and a human [人] mixed together, and there were quite a variety of entities, from dragon-type monsters to reptile-type monsters. But among them, there was a magic beast that came to Ryo Singh's mind first.

'Naga' In India, there are many myths with various animal motifs, but one can't leave out the snake monster 'Naga' as a myth that reminds one of a 'dragon'.

"Could it be that Naga have appeared?"

"I haven't checked the site myself, so I can't say for sure, but according to reports, it looks like Nagas."

**Flip.**

In response to Ryo Singh's question, the employee handed over the relevant materials in a businesslike manner.

"This— It really is a Naga!" Ryo Singh, who was handed over the materials, grew agitated.

A silhouette of a monster resembling a reptile emerging from the water. The silhouette of the beast in the photo in the data was very similar to the Naga that Ryo Singh knew. *'Besides, the location...'* After confirming the location of the area where the dragonfolk appeared, Ryo Singh sighed in pity.

"How can this happen! Loktak Lake and other places have all turned into field dungeons!" He couldn't believe it. While he was on a business trip to another country, he never thought that such a large-scale disaster would happen in India.

Loktak Lake is a large lake located in the Indian state of Manipur, and is one of the largest freshwater lakes in Southeast Asia. Around the lake, all the land in the area had been turned into a Field Dungeon. Ryo Singh asked the employee with a cool look. "How many Dungeon Breaks have exploded around here?"

"A total of five places exploded at the same time. One of them was attacked by the Guildmaster himself, so now there are four left."

"AH! This was not the time for me to go out so carefree! I should have stayed by the Guildmaster and assisted him somehow!" Ryo Singh was heartbroken. Even though this happened to their country, he didn't know anything! "This is not the time to sulk! I have to go help the Guildmaster right now! Secretary, please assemble all remaining troops in the guild under me!"

"This is a situation where all elite hunters have already been put into the field."

"The situation is so serious, it must be! Then I'll go find it myself, so please let me know the exact location of the Guildmaster!" That's how Ryo Singh went out of the guild with great

enthusiasm. Although, no matter how strong he was as an A-rank hunter, it was reckless to enter Loktak Lake alone. Strangely, none of the staff at the Asura Guild showed any signs of stopping Ryo Singh's actions.

Rather, they looked just the same as before. Possessed. Meanwhile the necklaces hanging around their necks were emitting a calm and subdued blue light.

The same light that emitted from the necklace on Ryo Singh's neck as he headed to Loktak Lake.

\* \* \*

A while later.

**Creak!**

*'This is it!'* Ryo Singh arrived in front of Loktak's Field Dungeon with a confident appearance. Even though he came here alone, he didn't feel afraid at all. So what if he was alone? Once he goes inside the guild members will welcome him. Also he didn't come here empty-handed, rather he bought some gifts for his hunter colleagues who might be struggling in this new gate.

*'Just you wait for me! I'm loaded with a lot of imported Korean hunter equipment!'* The back of the large truck he had driven all the way to was loaded with expensive items made by skilled artisans in Korea. Originally, his plan was to show these precious items to the Guildmaster one by one, and to be generous with his contributions. But wouldn't it be much more dramatic to show up with these in such an emergency moment?

*'Promotion! This is bound to give me an instant promotion!'* Ryo Singh's heart was filled with excitement as he thought of his colleagues who would already raise their arms and cheer when they saw this amazing equipment. "Okay then let's go!"

"Ryo Singh, is it really okay for the two of us to go in? The place seems..." Jackson, the truck driver, looked at Ryo Singh with a terrified expression. Before, he was a C rank hunter with stealth skills, and was a former subordinate of Ryo Singh. Although he was fired from the Asura Guild last year due to his lack of ability, he was a person with excellent driving skills in such rough terrain.

Of course, even if a C rank hunter had good driving skills, there was nothing to use, but it was suitable for the role of evacuating goods to dangerous Field Dungeons like today.

"Ryo Singh, even if I were to get caught up in danger, I have a stealth skill, so I might be able to escape somehow, but you only have attack skills..."

"Ugh! Who cares about it! Jackson, I will take full responsibility for your safety, so just focus on driving!"

"...Namaste." Jackson, the truck driver who was well aware of Ryo Singh's fighting prowess, closed his eyes. And when he opened his eyes again, they began to burn with a sense of

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mission to save his former comrades. Jackson grabbed the steering wheel and gritted his teeth. "Alright then, here goes nothing."

**Vroom!!**

In this way, a cargo truck loaded with Korean-made equipment boldly entered Loktak's Field Dungeon, and immediately, reptilian monsters from all sides blocked their path.

**Rwaaar! Shing! Shing!**

"It's a Lizardman!"

"Jackson! Don't stop! Trust me and just keep running straight!" Ryo Singh climbed right onto the truck, braced himself on his legs and held twin swords in each hand. He laughed ferociously as he glared at the Lizardmen who were attacking with vicious momentum. "They may be dragons but they are still just lizardmen!"

At this urgent moment, a face suddenly appeared in Ryo Singh's mind. *'My comrade, Sung Suho.'*

During all this time, he has gone through many adventures following Sung Suho. The Egyptian Pyramids. Ireland's Glacier Dungeon. Besides that, none of the incidents with him were as dangerous. He was the hunter who survived with Sung Suho through so many adversities and returned to his home country like this!

"Who else but me! Ryo Singh!"

**Slice! Slice! Slice! Slice! Slash!**

Ryo Singh's twin swords struck splendidly as they slashed all over the place. The net was dense and merciless as the Lizardmen screamed while being chopped. "Try as much as you want I can go all day!" Ryo Singh, who was protecting the truck and slaying the beasts by running back and forth, started to think about how he was resembling Suho more and more. No, they definitely look alike now!

*'No matter what anyone says, I'm Sung Suho's irreplaceable comrade!'*

**Shinggggg!!**

Jackson's truck drove over a puddle of blood created by Ryo Singh. "Ryo Singh! I see a lake in front of me! From now onwards, this is the real deal!" Jackson shouted as he stepped on the accelerator hard.

"Alright! Pass through here and you will find the fortress of the Asura Guild!" Ryo Singh responded, his body covered from head to toe in blood, but none of it his. Jackson showed his teeth and laughed at Ryo Singh's cool eyes, visible through the Lizardman's blood dripping from his forehead. *'Haha! Is this really the Ryo Singh I knew from before?'*

A rank hunter Ryo Singh. He was the elite of the Asura Guild in name and reality. A rookie who was recognized as the most elite hunter. However, he had one fatal flaw as a hunter,



and it was that he used his head too much rather than using his body. All his interests are only promotions! He had only a terrible desire for honor and wanting to receive admiration and attention from others.

*'Has that man been able to do things like these all along?'* Jackson, who only knew about Ryo Singh's past, felt his heart grow hot at the battle in front of him, and with all his heart, he wanted to help him fulfill his purpose. He sucked on the cigarette he was holding in his mouth and grinned. Then, holding onto the steering wheel with both hands, he exclaimed enthusiastically toward Ryo Singh, who was fighting a bloody battle outside.

"Alright then Ryo Singh! I trust you! I'm going to rush to the lakeside from now on! So guard my way!"

"Ah, stop!"

"!!!"

Suddenly, Jackson's pupils dilated, feeling as if time was passing slowly. In those eyes, from a distance, he could see the expression on the face of Ryo Singh, who hurriedly ran toward him with a puzzled look on his face.

**Shiingg!!!**

At the same time, the sound of water coming from the side. Jackson's head instinctively turned to the side. Before he could even turn his head completely, he saw the shape of a huge monster that had suddenly risen from within Loktak Lake. *'--What the?!'*

**Thud!**

The truck Jackson was in was thrown over the side.

"¡No!"

**Kudangtangtangtang!**

Ryo Singh threw himself at Jackson's truck, which rolled on the ground and crumpled in an instant. With the superhuman strength of an A rank hunter, he managed to stop the truck from moving however he couldn't check Jackson's condition.

**¡Aaaaaa!**

"!!!" A huge shadow of the 'Naga' emerged from the lake and cast over Ryo Singh.

**Kwaaang!**

A gigantic reptilian hand slammed down on Ryo Singh's head. Ryo Singh's pupils dilated at the sight, and the calculator ran in his head for an instant. *'I'm not a tanker.'*

The difference between the dealer and the tank is significant. As a dealer, he had the strength to stop a truck, but he didn't have the stamina or skills to deal with the attack of such a gigantic monster. That means soon. *'It's more efficient to counterattack after dodging!'*

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That would have been the perfect strategy for a dealer to give up defense and use dual swords. But if so, *'If I avoid it, Jackson will die!'* Ryo Singh fixed his stance with a determined look and crossed his twin swords.

And recalling the image of Sung Suho in his memory-

“¡Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!”

**Crack!!**

“!?!”

However, the Naga's defense was stronger than expected. The blade of the sword that touched the Naga's hand broke away helplessly. Despair came to Ryo Singh's eyes as he witnessed the scene. *'Oh, no...'* The reason for that despair was not because his own life was precious. No matter how much the dealer was, there was no way that he, an A rank hunter, would lose his life with one hit. However, what is certain is that Jackson, who is riding in the truck, will surely die from that attack. Jackson, who he had forced to set foot on this rough terrain! *'NO-!'*

**¡Woosh!**

In that desperate situation, the shadow assassin Kira, who had been quietly holding his breath at Ryo Singh's feet, moved under the master's orders.

**T-ring!**

[Use 'Skill: Shadow Exchange'.]

**Swoop!**

“Ah!!” Ryo Singh's bulging eyes looked ahead.

The firm back of the man who suddenly blocked him. The figure of *'him'* who easily blocked Naga's powerful attack with one hand.

“...I found a good one.” A faint smile appeared on his lips.

As if his pride had been hurt by that appearance, the Naga snarled ferociously and pressed down the hand he had struck with even greater force. But for some reason, the Naga's hand didn't move. Suho just turned his head and said to Ryo Singh.

“Rest here for a while, I'll take care of the rest.” Then, Suho looked forward again, and his eyes suddenly changed like a hunter who found his prey. “Wake up.”

**Wah!**

"Greed."

!!!

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At that moment, the S rank Hunter, who returned as a shadow soldier, stood up in front of the huge Naga.

-----

1: The original translation is 용인족(龍人族) which can also be translated as Dragonewts or Dragonoids, Edits: So the original translations in the light novel of SL have them be called Dragonfolk. I just noticed this after reading the LN again so I will be quickly changing the term. Don't worry, everything else is the same. I just want this translation to be the same as the ones from the official translations.

# 202

Haeundae, Busan.

While fighting Javier, a demon tribe he encountered there, Suho had received a quest from Sung Jin-Woo's vision.

[Urgent quest: Prove your worthiness!]

A vision of the Shadow Monarch 'Sung Jin-Woo' demands proof of his qualifications from his son. Defeat Javier, the Demon Illusionist, and awaken a new Shadow Skill. In the course of this quest, Suho learned the "Monarch's Dominion", but this was only a self-enlightenment, not a reward from the quest itself.

There was a separate Shadow Power that he received after completing the quest. That's this new Shadow Skill.

[Skill: Shadow Exchange Lv.1]

Shadow Skill.

No Mana required.

You can swap the position of the specified Shadow Soldier and caster. Once cast, a 3-hour cooldown must pass before it can be used again. The waiting time depends on your skill level.

This skill allowed the Shadow Soldier to change their position no matter where they were, and it was almost like teleportation. As soon as Suho saw this skill, he immediately understood what it was. "It's like a gate." This ability was quite familiar to Suho, who usually used his shadow as a gate to freely enter and exit the underworld of the Shadow Dungeon. After a few exercises, Suho immediately understood the usefulness of this skill, and then sent the shadow soldier Kira to India with Ryo Singh just in case.

This is the result.

**¡Boom!**

"Kraaa!!"

[Haha! You can hold your ground? That's impressive!]

[High Priest, No, Greed! That's because we've been weakened!]

Shadow Soldiers Greed and Iron laughed heartily as they slashed the unbelievably large and hideous giant of the Naga family. Ryo Singh, who was watching the wondrous scene from behind, couldn't help but drop his jaw.

*'Oh my God. Were Suho's summons always that strong?'* With a human-like upper body and a sea snake monster on the lower body, "Naga" was a quasi-boss-level monster that only appeared occasionally in advanced dungeons. The size and strength of each individual varied greatly, but the steel-like scales that covered their entire body were so protective that they could be used as materials for various materials such as armor and shields. "And yet they shatter like it's nothing..."

[Uh-huh!]

[¡Hahahaha!]

"Krarak-! Kyaa!!"

**Bang! ¡Boom! Bang!**

The Shadow Soldiers' relentless onslaught had crumpled and torn the Naga's scales, tough and hard, like a sheet of paper. "That's at least as good as an A rank, maybe even an S rank Hunter. These monstrous monsters were destroyed by a single Hunter." Ryo Singh couldn't believe his eyes. He couldn't believe it even when he saw it himself, so he wondered if anyone would believe him if he told it.

Still, *'They are dangerous either way! According to the information, I was sure they were Nagas...!'* Ryo Singh, like an elite, had learned as much information as he could about the Naga before coming here. A high-level demon beast that is skilled in both outgoing combat and magic, making even seasoned hunters struggle. Even high-level demonstrators always rode in groups, so the difficulty of attacking them was quite high. And this information was very rare due to the appearance of the Naga so it was not yet widely disseminated to the public.

Ryo Singh shouted urgently. "Suho! Be careful! I've heard that the Naga swarm in groups of at least 30 of them—" But before he could say that, all the Naga hiding in the lake came out all at once. Then he ran over the side of Greed and Iron, who were dealing with one of them.

**Swaaaaa!**

Too bad for them, because they weren't outnumbered either.

**Smirk.**

"Do you guys want to enjoy a feast?" Suho opened his mouth with a meaningful smile. "Arise."

!!!

At that moment, the Shadow Soldiers rose from the shadow of the guardian in unison. It was a sight to behold as they fought against dozens of Naga. And Ryo Singh finally realized it. *'Oh my God. It wasn't just a new powerful summon.'* The identity of the suspicion that had lingered in the back of his head the entire time he had been following Suho. *'....He is a hunter who can grow!'*

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A hunter's power does not change. That was basic common sense. Hunters can refine their skills and become more proficient in fighting demons through training and runestones, but the Hunter's fundamental power, which is determined at the same time as awakening, will never change.

However, he didn't know that there was a Hunter who ignored such common sense and was growing day by day. And to think it was right in front of him the whole time!

*'Such a stupid thing!! Why am I only now aware of this?'* Ryo Singh lamented his narrow-sightedness. Even though summoners vary depending on the number of summons, he was finally convinced that his comrade-in-arms, who had passed through life and death with him many times, has special abilities!

Then it dawned on him.

"...Oh right! Jackson! Jackson!" This was not the time to think. Ryo Singh belatedly came to his senses and rescued Jackson from the unconscious inside the overturned truck. The state of the truck was so badly wrecked that the driver was killed instantly, but Jackson, a Class C Hunter, was fortunately unscathed.

[Hmm. Don't worry, he's not dead.]

Before he knew it, Beru had approached Jackson, checked on him, and flew straight to Suho. Then, Suho, who was in charge of the battle, came up to Jackson in an instant and poured a potion into his mouth.

"...Cough!"

Ryo Singh breathed a sigh of relief as Jackson's bleeding forehead wound gradually healed. It was at this moment that he realized that he was responsible for dragging his old subordinate, Jackson, into his pursuit of a promotion. At the same time, he was horrified to realize once again how special a hunter Suho was. He just couldn't believe that the latter could summon S rank summons like that and at the same time have the ability to be a healer. Is this the level of a special path that Suho can walk on?

"Suho! I have a favor to ask of you!" Ryo Singh helped Jackson to his senses as he urgently called for Suho. He already had an unpayable debt from being saved, but he had no choice except to ask for help. "All the power of our Asura Guild is here right now! But it's so strange that the Naga are still haunting the field from the very beginning!"

He was right.

This is the beginning of the Field Dungeon. The Asura Guild that came in to attack this field had no choice but to pass by this place. So how likely is it that such a large horde of magic beasts could have gone unnoticed?

"I don't think they would have let them go unpurposed, and I'm sure something big happened that we didn't know about..."

"Perhaps they've been let free."

"Huh?" The answer did not come from the mouth of the guardian. '*Doh, lizards?*' Ryo Singh was taken aback. Before he knew it, a small flying lizard perched on Suho's shoulder was looking around with a stern look in his eyes. "Hmm. I thought there would be remnants of the Naga family that were still alive. After all, the only ones who survive the war are the cowards." As soon as the cub dragon Ragnar regains its mana, Antares quickly regains his body. His gaze scanned the Nagas, and then he opened his eyes at the familiar energy vibrating on the shore of the lake.

"Well this is certainly peculiar. Somewhere in here, I can feel the energy of the Draconic people."

"Dragons?"

"Yes. The Draconic people, like the Naga family, were one of the many tribes that served our people. Every single one of them was wiped out by your father."

"And implemented into the shadow army."

"Yes. However, I don't know why this place smells like dragon people. I wonder if there are survivors like them."

Just then, the battle was over.

**Bam! Thud!**

"Huh, already?!" Ryo Singh was horrified by the sight of so many Nagas collapsing. Suho nodded with a satisfied smile as he looked at Greed and Iron among the Shadow Corps that had cleared out the Naga.

"Well, dead or not, a career job is a career job." Greed and Iron, who once served in the Shadow Monarch Sung Jin-Woo's legion, were now new soldiers who had just joined Suho's army. However they were also experienced recruits who had a knack for wanting to command the Shadow Soldiers under them.

If you think about it, it was to be expected. In his previous life, Greed was an S rank hunter who belonged to the strongest guild representing the United States, Scavenger. Iron is also a promising ace of the White Tiger Guild, who was one of the best guilds in Korea in his previous life, and A rank hunter Kim Chul.

They were not only strong in their bodies, but they were also corps commander-level soldiers who were adept at commanding soldiers.

[Lord Suho, I have returned from a successful hunt according to my orders!]

Greed and Iron hunted down the Naga and then sent the other soldiers to drag the massive corpses in front of Suho, even though Suho had not given them any orders.

[Young lord, why don't you take these Nagas as Shadow Soldiers?]

[They may be stupid, but they are quite useful animals for livestock.]

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They had been Sung Jin-Woo's soldiers for a long time, and they knew a lot like Beru. Antares looked at Naga's corpse and said with a bite in his mouth. "Child of Shadows. You know what? Originally, Nagas were cowards who hid in the deep water because they didn't want to fall prey to our Berserk Dragons."

"Prey?"

"Yes. They have a lot of flesh and are therefore the perfect prey."

**Gulp.**

Antares, who had been swallowing his tongue as he explained the Naga, proclaimed proudly.

"I, Antares, Dragon Emperor and Monarch of Destruction, declare that I shall eat them all! In order to increase the magic of this despicable Ragnar a little!"

"Oh, okay."

Suho readily agreed. Anyway, once he extracted them as a shadow soldier, he didn't care about the corpse of the demon beast. Of course, if you put it on the market, you can sell it at a high price, but it was much more profitable for Suho to have more magic power than money.

[This is a target that can be extracted.]

[This is a target that can be extracted.]

.....

"Arise."

At the guardian's command, the shadows of the giant Naga swirled in unison, and they stood.

"¡Huh?!"

"W-whathe!"

The sight of wonder caused Ryo Singh and Jackson to collapse their legs and fall to their ground. The great magic beasts that had been thought to be dead had risen from the dead! They were a little smaller than before, but the sight of black steam burning all over their bodies was haunting. Ignoring their surprise, however, Suho chose the strongest of them and saved him as his shadow soldier.

[Please give a name to the soldier.]

As usual, he was prompted to name the soldier. "Well, how about— . No, let's say Gordon."

[Do you want to save 'Gordon'?]



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"Yes." Suho gave him the name 'Gordon' without thinking about it. This added a powerful giant demon beast to the Guardian Shadow Legion. But Suho's bigger concern was something else. It's a former quest. While hunting this Naga swarm, he reached a whopping level of 4, and as a result...

[Level: 87]

Suho glanced at the status window and smiled faintly as he stared ahead.

"...This was a much better place than I thought, wasn't it?"

Antares advised him with a stern look. "Either way you must be wary of the dragons that—Beep?" Ragnar was back.

[The King of Dragons, Monarch of Destruction, is upset and clutches his face.]

[The King of Dragons, Monarch of Destruction, nags to feed Ragnar those Nagas...]

## 203

After the battle, Suho traveled with Ryo Singh as he sent Gordon to pick up Jackson's truck that had been ruined in a horrific manner. The 'stupid but usable livestock,' –or so Greed called him– Gordon followed Suho, carrying a truck full of Korean-made weapons and moving his lower body in the shape of a sea serpent. Other Nagas continued to haunt their path, but they were no match for the Shadow Naga, as well as the daily mercenaries that had just swooped in.

As he continued to travel through Loktak Field, Suho was given an explanation of this place by Ryo Singh.

"...What?" Suho's expression hardened. He blindly used the shadow exchange skill to cross over to India, but when he finished listening to the explanation, he realized that the situation in this country was much more serious than he thought.

In short, the root of the problem was due to the geopolitical nature of Manipur where the Loktak field originated. The state of Manipur is located in the northeastern part of India. The land was located halfway between the borders of Myanmar, Bangladesh, China, and many other countries. Because of this geopolitical nature, there have been many serious conflicts in this land throughout history. The reasons for the conflict varied from political, religious, to tribal civil wars.

"...But the problem now is that there are a lot of dungeon breaks happening around this place at the same time, so the Field Dungeon has become too wide."

"Could it be that the scope of the field has crossed the border?"

"That's right. I can't believe you understood this right away! Well you are Suho after all."

"It's a similar situation in Korea. North Korea is always a problem for our country."

Despite Ryo Singh's admiring reaction, Suho only had a bitter expression on his face. If left unattended, the Field Dungeon has the characteristic of gradually spreading the Blue Mist and expanding the area. Of course, most of the time, if you manage it well, it won't spread beyond a certain range, but when multiple dungeons are stacked in one area like this, it's a completely different story.

North Korea is a representative place of this. North Korea was a land that had been turned into a giant monster field at the same time as the cataclysm. If left unchecked, the field will grow exponentially, eventually crossing the border of China, which is directly above it. North Korea's henchmen will invade China. If that happens, the situation will inevitably turn into a political issue with China.

"That's right. After all, if our country fails to get rid of the magic beast in time and causes damage to the neighboring country, the problem will become far more serious. Compensation for damages is there, but the bigger problem is ...."

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"If a foreign Hunter Guild crosses the border to capture them, there's nothing they can do to stop them."

"Exactly."

"There may be a war." At Suho's words, Ryo Singh and Jackson nodded with serious expressions.

A hunters' guild, with its many awakened members, was no different from an army. On the contrary, in terms of combat power, they were far more powerful and dangerous than soldiers. *'...It's already a war in itself. As soon as you break into the National Assembly and make a mess of it, the country is effectively conquered.'*

In order to prevent such a situation, Woo Jin-Chul, the president of the association, was making all-out efforts to purify North Korea even at this moment.

"Wait." At that moment, Suho, who was having a conversation with Ryo Singh, suddenly thought of the biggest problem at hand and looked around.

Loktak Lake is a famous tourist attraction in India. The scenery here was really beautiful. However, considering the identity of the 'Blue Mist' that naturally blends into this beautiful landscape, he couldn't help but get goosebumps. If the Blue Mist was inhaled by ordinary people who were not awakened, their entire bodies would burn and they would turn into Mist Burns and go berserk.

"Ryo, how many people live in this place?"

"Three million."

"Oh no."

Suho's expression became even more serious at the answer that immediately popped out. "Could it be that all those three million people have awakened, and that all of them have turned into Mist Burns?"

"They haven't. In fact, that was the first thing I was worried about, but luckily that didn't seem to be the case."

In response, Ryo Singh picked up the 'Badge of the Asura Guild' he wore around his neck and showed it to Suho.

"It's a Stardust Necklace, isn't it?" Suho's eyes widened. No, the piece was much larger than the Stardust Necklace, and a little smaller than the Star Piece embedded in Greed and Sung Il-Hwan's body. If I had to name it, it would be a star-carved necklace. Suho immediately snatched Ryo Singh's Stardust Necklace and asked. "Where did you get this?"

"It's an employee ID that proves that you belong to our Asura Guild. I started using it recently, but when I looked it up, I found out that there is a reason why this necklace came to symbolize our guild. Look at this."

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**Snap.**

Ryo Singh pulled out a new necklace from his bosom and showed it to Suho. This time, the small size of the jewel was similar to the "Stardust Necklace" that was distributed in Korea.

"The name of this necklace is 'Stardust'. It's something that our guild is distributing to Indians for free."

"A Stardust Necklace? Why?"

"If a member of the public owns this necklace, it will not turn into a Mist Burn when they inhale the Blue Mist."

"!!!"

\* \* \*

The Asura Guild was one of the most famous guilds in India, and it was always committed to the protection of its citizens. Its leader, Siddharth Bachchan, was also an S rank hunter who had such a positive influence among the Indians.

The 'Stardust Necklace' was the same thing that Siddharth Bachchan was said to have developed for the common people of India. When a dungeon break went off in an area, not everyone could leave the land so suddenly. The poor common people, in particular, had nowhere to go, having lived there for a long time. But that didn't stop the problems. If you stay in the land of the Blue Mist for too long, you will eventually become a Mist Burn and burn to death. Just then, Stardust started to be developed at that time.

"...Real people live here." A while later, the Suho and their group found small villages scattered throughout Loktak Field. As Ryo Singh said, he saw a lot of ordinary people still living there. His face was stunned as he saw all of them wearing Stardust Necklaces.

[My lord, it seems that the influence of the Foreign Religion in this country is much faster]

[By the looks of it, the Foreign Religion might become India's state religion.]

Greed and Iron, former high priests and priest of the Foreign Religion, showed their small faces on either side of Suho and added:

[If you wear a Stardust Necklace for a long time, you will instinctively develop a devotion to the Itarim.]

[Of course, it is not a faith in the true religious sense, but more of a phenomenon in which the mind is contaminated by the power of a higher being.]

[The capabilities of the Indian priests are quite admirable! To be able to distribute it like this to the whole nation unlike the Korean priests.]

"How is this admirable? Both of you, throw your heads to the ground."

[Yes.]

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[Ah but I didn't say anything— Yes lord.]

At Suho's words, Greed and Iron fell to the ground front-faced.

What was curious was that the villagers didn't react to the sight of these Shadow Soldiers. It's normal to react with surprise or a whisper here and there, but it was quite bizarre to see everyone doing their job with no expression. Even though there had been an invasion of the village at some point, and the corpses of the dead were strewn everywhere, no one cared about it.

"Suho, all the people in our office looked like that. Could this be a side effect of all the Stardust that was put in the open?"

"I think so." When Ryo Singh heard about the Stardust Necklace incident in Korea, he had a bad look on his face. It was horrifying to think that this could spread to the whole of India. Looking around the village, Suho decided to find the one who caused this incident without hesitation.

"Ryo, let's start by finding where your Guildmaster, Siddharth Bachchan, is. If he is an Apostle of the Itarim, then feeding him the Spring Water of the Echo Forest might make things easier than you think."

"Okay. But how will you find him? No one in the guild office was able to track his exact whereabouts."

"Hmm, then I'll have to ask for an expert." Without hesitation, Suho turned his head and called the experts. "Greed. Iron."

[Yep!]

[Did you call!]

"Can you find the location of the Void Gate?"

Greed and Iron scrambled to explain.

[Oh Lord Suho is quite wise in his judgment.]

[The Temple of the Foreign Religion is bound to be built near the gap between the dimensions, so...]

"Get to the point."

[Void gates are caused by fields from normal gates stacking on top of each other.]

[Draw a circle around the gates, and somewhere at the intersection there will be a void gate.]

"Can you find it?" Suho's question made Greed and Iron smile confidently and their eyes flashed.

[Leave it to me!]

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[If we disperse with the soldiers, we'll be able to find them in no time.]

[Master! Give me a chance!]

[Huh?]

The corners of Greed's mouth twitched at the sight of the shadow spear knight's desire to win when he suddenly appeared. "It doesn't matter, so let's go."

**¡Woosh!**

At the command of the guardian, the Shadow Soldiers scattered as if they were competing. The only soldier left by Suho's side was Gordon, the shadow who followed him with a truck.

"Okay, so we're going to go to the next town on our own—"

**Bang!**

“!!!”

“!!!”

Suho and Ryo Singh's expressions changed suddenly as their eyes turned in the same direction.

**¡Boom!**

It's a battle!

A series of violent explosions erupted in the direction where Greed had gone, shaking the ground as if it had been an earthquake. Considering that this was a field full of magic beasts, it was quite possible, but the energy he felt was too unusual to dismiss it as such. Beru twitched his antennae as he gauged the energy of the enemy Greed was facing.

[It must be at least S rank!]

"Beep?" If even Ragnar reacted, then it was obvious.

"Dragon Folk!"

**Bang!**

Immediately, Suho kicked the ground and sprang forward. *'If it's S rank, could it be Siddharth Bachchan? But then why would he be with the dragonfolk?'* As he ran, Suho's mind flashed through the number of cases. However, when we arrived at the scene of the battle, he found that the situation was a little different from what we had expected.

**Flash!!**

**¡Boom!**

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By the time Suho arrived, there had already been a clash of forces that had turned the entire earth upside down. At the same time, there were screams from all sides. At the center of that immense clash of forces was Greed, who was battling a man\*. 'A Three-way battle?'

**Pow Pow!! Pow Pow Pow!!**

What was most surprising was the identity of the opponent who faced the power of the former S rank villain Greed head-on and never backed down. No, it was better to say that it was overwhelming Greed.

"...Interesting."

He was an old man with white hair and an enormous energy radiating from his entire body. There was a sinister smile on his lips as he clashed with Greed. It's as if he's having a lot of fun with this battle. But the language that came out of his mouth was not Indian.

"I can't believe a magic beast can have this much power."

Chinese.

Apart from the language, he was a completely different person from Siddhart Bachchan, who had also been a National Level Hunter in his previous life.

Remembering his face in a long memory, Beru shouted his name.

[Liu Zhigang!]

Liu Zhigang from China. A man who had once been hailed as the greatest power of mankind alongside Thomas Andre.

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*I've devoted my whole life to martial arts.<sup>(1)</sup>*

Liu Zhigang. China's proud Six-Star Hunter. <sup>(1.5)</sup>

*'I've never learned to back down.'*

China doesn't follow the standard hunter rating, instead, it uses its own rating system. The more stars a hunter has, the better they are, and the Five-Star hunters were the highest of their rank.

That applied to everyone else except for one person. Liu Zhigang was the only one classified as an out-of-class hunter and was called a Six-Star hunter instead. As such, the treatment was also on a different level from the Five-Stars. However, no one could argue with his exceptional power that he more than deserved it, for he was the true savior of the People's Republic of China. He who reliably defended China in the midst of the chaotic upheaval.

*'...This time as well, I will not back down.'*

Unknowst, Liu Zhigang was hiding a secret that not a single person in China—who boasted a population of more than 1 billion—knew ever since the Cataclysm started.

*'Do you think I, Liu Zhigang, will ever be swayed by your power?!'* <sup>(2)</sup>

He had been battling the Itarim's Divinity <sup>(3)</sup> alone for more than two years in order to not become possessed.

\* \* \*

After awakening as a Hunter, it didn't take long for Liu Zhigang to realize that the power he was given was different from others.

Awakening, a mysterious power that suddenly arose within the body. He's heard from other Hunters that awakening their magic gives them a tremendous sense of uplift. But for Liu Zhigang it was different. *'...This isn't enough.'*

The moment the magic came, the sensation he felt was surprisingly empty. When people are so hungry, they end up not even feeling hungry. But when someone suddenly puts a piece of bread in his mouth, his hungry stomach begins to realize the terrible hunger that he had forgotten.

*'I want power, more power! Give it to me!'*

And the intense hunger that Liu Zhigang felt, It would be exactly the same hunger that Thomas Andre, a National-Level hunter had felt in his previous life. Unfortunately, Liu Zhigang was a little less fortunate than Thomas Andre.



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Sensing his intense hunger for power, someone had come to him to fill the void of his heart, as if they had been waiting for such a chance all along.

[Do you crave for more power?]

‘!!!’

[I'll give it to you, far more than what you crave.]

Liu Zhigang couldn't help but be stunned. A mysterious voice whispered in his ear like a devil, as though he knew exactly what was going on.

*'Who are you?'*

[The name is not important, what is, is that your vessel is big enough to accept me.]

‘!!!’

**Whoa!**

The voice didn't ask Liu Zhigang for permission at first as he, all the sudden, felt a new power from outer space begging to flow into Liu Zhigang's empty vessel. At the same time, the hunger in his heart began to be satisfied, as if he had never been empty in the first place.

But nothing in life comes for free.

[You must obey me.]

‘!!!’

Just like that, Liu Zhigang was awakened and reborn as an Apostle of the Itarim.

*‘...Don't be ridiculous!’*

But there was something that even Itarim's Divinity hadn't predicted. Liu Zhigang was a warrior who had walked the path of "martial arts" all his life. It was different from Thomas Andre, who had lived his whole life as a bastard by means of violence, and he had devoted his whole life to the Tao by placing the Tao at the center of his heart.

*'I don't believe in God! My mind is all mine!'*

[!!!]

Liu Zhigang, who had been embracing the power of his entire body, gritted his teeth and managed to endure the forced submission. But the Itarim's Divinity was not something a mere human could handle.

[Worship.]

[Praise.]

[Prove your faith...]

*'Shut up! Shut up! No matter who you are! I am— I!'*

Liu Zhigang instinctively resisted the desire to prostrate himself before the great power and worship it, gritting his teeth. A headache that makes you feel like your head is going to break. A stream of blood dripped down the corner of his clenched mouth. But at the same time, the emotions that surged up on Liu Zhigang's face were none other than "humiliation" and "self-righteousness."

**¡Boom!**

*'...I am Liu Zhigang!'*

[.....]

As a result, Liu Zhigang was not contaminated by Itarim's Divinity after all. No, it was still being polluted by the moment, but Liu Zhigang managed to resist the power. With the two long swords he had trained all his life, he entered the dungeon and began to kill the magic beasts at will. In this way, he unleashed the power of the Itarim to take over his body relentlessly.

*\*Taeguk\*<sup>(4)</sup>*

*'I shall graft one twig in another!'* <sup>(5)</sup>

*'And overcome the strong!'* <sup>(6)</sup>

It was good to call it anything. As a way to keep his sanity, Liu Zhigang found the answer in the martial arts he had practiced all his life. Of course, one can't come to the union in which actions and beliefs align perfectly, but Liu Zhigang desperately tried to succeed in it.

**¡WAAHH!**

As he walked, countless beasts bled to death. Liu Zhigang reversed the direction of the Itarim power flowing into him, constantly erupting out of his body. A Guild? The forces that respect and follow you? He didn't have the energy to care about that. It's been like that for two years. During that time, Liu Zhigang wandered restlessly across China like a madman, unleashing the power of Itarim against the magic beasts.

Instead of accepting the overwhelming Divinity within, he bounced it out. Even in his sleep, he couldn't let his guard down.

In his dreams, he had to fight with his inner demons, who was looking for the moment to reveal his flaws. A thorough lonely and arduous road.

In the process, he gained the sincere respect and support of a billion Chinese people and the ostentatious prestige of a Six-Star hunter, but it wasn't a good thing for him. He had only one interest. *'To not be devoured by these inner demons, who want to control my mind!'*

That's how Liu Zhigang slowly became a monster who would run around aimlessly looking to kill magic beasts. In particular, rather than going to a dungeon where many interests were intertwined, a dangerously neglected Field Dungeon was the perfect battlefield for him to run rampant to his heart's content. Even if it exists in another country beyond its borders.

*'Siddharth Bachchan has come to personally deal with this matter and yet he has still failed to seal the gate?'*

Liu Zhigang willingly crossed the border where even India's S-rank Hunters had entered the 'Loktak Field'.

- Liu Zhigang has invaded the Indian border!

-Wait what! Why?!

Naturally, the aftermath was by no means small. The Chinese government, which was well aware of his wanderlust, had done everything it could to prevent this from happening. Before his hunts were over, they would always give him another hunting spot in the next vicinity immediately, while they took care of everything else. After all, there were countless hunting grounds in the vast Chinese mainland, and plenty of Field Dungeons where Liu Zhigang could fight frantically until all his magic was exhausted. But this time, they couldn't stop him.

- Liu Zhigang has finally crossed the border!

- Why didn't you stop him?!

- You know what it means for a Six-Star hunter in China to cross the border!

- It turns into a diplomatic issue!

Chinese public opinion was seething. Many people had seen him crossing the border without permission, and the fact quickly reached the ears of the Indian government. This time, public opinion in India was also ignited.

- China's strongest hunter invaded India?!

- Is China really going to war with India?

- There must be a Chinese conspiracy aimed at this from the beginning!

-What does it mean that there is a field with Siddharth Bachchan at the end of Liu Zhigang's path? Could it be that Liu Zhigang is tired of slaughtering magic beasts and is aiming for Siddharth Bachchan next!?!

-If China doesn't want war, then Liu Zhigang, who invaded India, should right now—!

In fact, this was a situation that no one wanted. Of course, in the Internet community, there were some thoughtless people who were talking nonsense about taking over India on this occasion, but they were in the minority. Especially for the Chinese government, which tried to stop his progress at all costs on the border, it was almost frustrating. Liu Zhigang, the

stubborn old man who had walked the path of martial arts all his life, was not a man who could be persuaded at all. In the end, they had no choice but to post Liu Zhigang's remarks on the Internet, which were recorded by the staff guarding the border.

- Are your heads just worn for ornaments? Would you like me to take them off?

### **Chills.**

At Liu Zhigang's words, the Chinese hunters who were trying to stop him from crossing the border hid their necks with thoughtful faces. The Loktak field, which Siddharth Bachchan is also struggling with, is getting bigger and bigger. And right above that is China. Apart from that, Liu Zhigang had his own cause. Before crossing the border, he fixed his sharp gaze on the camera and raised his voice.

- Tell the people clearly! I, Liu Zhigang, am not confident that I can prevent the accident that Siddharth Bachchan failed to prevent, so I will go to help him from now on. If you're not happy about that, then go take it upon yourself to catch it.

That was an obvious excuse. He just wanted to get into the field where Siddharth Bachchan was struggling and run wild to his heart's content.

*'...This is my limit.'* After more than two years of holding on, he was growing weary of it. He had to find stronger magic beasts as soon as possible, and unleash all his evil power to control his heart at all times. *'Or eventually, I'll be eaten.'*

In the end, Liu Zhigang had run into him. Someone who would be worth putting all his energy into. A sinister evil spirit with mysterious steam blazing all over his body.

"Uh-huh! I can't believe there was such a strong magic beast around here! I'm glad I came here!" .

Greed.

### **[My lord!]**

Greed, who had been engaged in a fight with him, shouted at the late arrival of Suho. And at that moment, Liu Zhigang and Suho's eyes, which were far away from each other, met in the air. Liu Zhigang glared at Suho and snarled fiercely.

"What do you have to do with this evil spirit?"

"..." He is in trouble. Suho's expression hardened at the sound of his murderous voice. *It's Chinese.*

-----

1: '일생을 무(武)에 전념했다.' To make it more literal, he means he has studied the way of the blade but the 무(武) or MU can also apply to all kinds of martial arts.

1.5: Yes, six, he doesn't have the seven stars unlike his past life.

2: In the original translation it is ‘나 류즈캉이 내 안의 심마(心魔) 따위에게 잡아먹힐 것 같으냐-!’ (Do you think I will be eaten by my **inner thoughts**!) 심마(心魔) or Simma is a literary term that comes from Wuxia or Eastern Martial Arts novels and it signifies a demon that resides deep within the mind, usually appearing to tempt people so they don't attain enlightenment. It's the inherent evil of human beings in other words. In the other passages I use the term inner demons instead when the word is brought up again.

3: 이타림의 신격과. the Divinity (Deity 신 status격) or rather influence of Itarim that enables them to fully possess a human being, in this case it brainwashes them to complete obedience.

4: Taeguk 태극(太極) is a Korean term meaning "**supreme** ultimate", although it can also be translated as "great polarity / duality". The term and its overall concept is related to the Chinese Taiji/Tai-chi.

5: ‘이화접목(移花接木)’ To graft (figuratively) one twig on another: Often used metaphorically to denote the transfer of a certain technology, idea, or concept from one field to another. In this case Zhigang is *grafting* all of his martial art's teachings in order to fully repel the Itarim. In the same way one uses meditation outside of buddhism.

6: ‘유능제강(柔能制剛)’ The idiom of this interpretation is that the strong can subdue the strong, so I changed it to something that fits more of what's it's trying to convey instead of its literal sense.

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Suho was also familiar with Liu Zhigang.

*'China's one and only Six-Star hunter. In his previous life, he was a Seven-Star.'*

What a coincidence. In his search for Siddharth Bachchan, he unexpectedly ran into another National Level Hunter. It even seemed that the Apostle of Itarim was already in his body. Suho nodded upon seeing the blue mana that was constantly leaking out of Liu Zhigang's entire body. "After all, it was correct to assume that Itarim would have approached all of the National Level Hunters."

He was surprised to encounter Liu Zhigang in an unexpected place, but it was a good thing that he was able to speed things up.

[Young Lord, hurry up and give Liu Zhigang the Spring Water of the Echo Forest!]

Suho immediately grabbed a Purifying Potion from his inventory. But it didn't look like it would be easy. Is it possible to break through the incessant barrage of attacks from all sides, and put a Purifying Potion in his mouth? It seemed that it would be difficult to spray it on his body like it did with Thomas Andre. After all, the best way to do this is through conversation, but the problem is the language barrier. For Suho who didn't speak Chinese at all, it was impossible for him to communicate with Liu Zhigang in the first place. None of the Shadow Soldiers could speak Chinese either.

"Then the only way I can do this is..."

[Don't worry, I'll quickly catch any Chinese who are passing by and eat their brains—]

"Nope, stop."

Suho hastily caught Beru, who was about to leave in search of any Chinese. Fortunately, it was quicker to find an Indian who was fluent in Chinese than it was to find (and eat) a Chinese person in India. Since, isn't there someone who can do just that?

"Suho! I'm here! AH! Liu— Liu Zhigang?!"

"Why is China's Liu Zhigang here!!"

Ryo Singh and Jackson, who had been chasing Suho with Gordon out of the shadows a step too late, saw Liu Zhigang and their eyes immediately widened. Suho shouted at Ryo Singh. "Ryo Singh! Can you translate Chinese?"

"Of course! I'm the elite of the Asura Guild! I speak 10 languages!"

[Kieek? Was it so? Oh I get it now! Once I eat his brain then everything will—Kieek?!.]

**Press.**

Suho's foot lightly stepped on Beru who was trying to reach out to Ryo Singh. As he stopped Beru, he shouted back "Ryo Singh! From now on, translate what I say to Liu Zhigang!"

"Got it!" Ryo Singh nodded confidently and shouted at Liu Zhigang, who was fighting Greed.

"Liu Zhigang! We are not your enemies!!!"

**Bang!**

Unfortunately, the current situation was too violent to be resolved through dialogue.

**¡Boom!**

Liu Zhigang's sword qi brushed shallowly against Greed's body, cutting through the forest behind him.

[Huh?!]

Suddenly, Liu Zhigang swerved and leapt towards Suho while Greed gnashed his teeth and chased after him. "How dare you overtake me and aim for our Young Lord!" And then—

**Paaat!**

[!!!]

At that moment, Liu Zhigang suddenly flipped in the air and tried to find a loophole against Greed again.

**¡Boom!**

Greed gnashed his teeth as he managed to parry his attacks. Their eyes lit up, and powerful energy clashed with each other. **Smirk.** Liu Zhigang glared at Greed, a faint smile formed on his lips. "I confirmed it now, you're all acting in one group."

Liu Zhigang's battle was informal. The penance of the past two years has made him so. The boundary between reality and imagination had become blurred allowing for endless freedom of bloodthirst to roam. That was the path of swordsmanship that Liu Zhigang reached in this life: 'Berserker' 'Slaughterer' 'Sword Demon' It was the reason why the man who was once a National Level Hunter was given such vicious nicknames.

[Is this really the Liu Zhigang of this life!?!]

There was a deep smile on Greed's lips. Greed clearly remembered Liu Zhigang's name in his previous life. Although it was a pity that the power of the National Level Hunter was gone, Greed himself was considerably weaker than when he was Sung Jin-Woo's soldier.

[Then I'll take this seriously, with all my heart!]

**¡Boom!**

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In an instant, the beautiful scenery was destroyed, and the aftermath of a natural disaster spread all around.

"Oh my God. What the hell is this..."

"Is this Liu Zhigang's power..."

In the face of such devastation, Ryo Singh and Jackson could not keep their mouths shut. And at the same time, there was one question that came to mind: the presence of Greed, who was fighting against Liu Zhigang, was not being pushed back at all.

*'No way, It's getting close to Liu Zhigang's power?'*

*'It's not like Hunter Sung Suho is fighting directly, so how can a single summon have that much power!'*

Notably, Ryo Singh, who was familiar with the number of summons that Suho usually wields, was shocked. Right now they're all scattered under the command of Suho, but what if all those soldiers gathered here?

*'Does Liu Zhigang even stand a chance?'* Ryo Singh dared not to imagine. But now he had no time to sit back and watch the fight. If he got caught up in the aftermath, his life would be in danger. "Jackson! Let's get back for now! This is not a safe place for us to talk!" Ryo Singh and Jackson gave up interpreting and fell back in a hurry. But they weren't the only ones caught up in the aftermath of the battle.

"Kieek!"

"Hissss!"

The dragonfolk who had encountered Liu Zhigang one step ahead of Greed, and were fighting against him, were also thrown away from the fight. Looking at the dragonfolk, Suho narrowed his eyes as he looked at the names above their heads.

[Variant No. 8]

[Variant No. 8]

*'Variant No. 8?'* Suho left Liu Zhigang to Greed for a moment, paying attention to the appearance of the dragonfolk he had never seen before. Half-man, half-dragon. It was a half-hearted race that was closer to the human side than the Lizardmen. Aside from their appearance, however, blue mana was emanating from the 'Star Piece' planted throughout their bodies.

Just like the Foreign followers in the black market!

"Could it be that they transplanted Star Pieces into magic beasts?" Ever since he came to this country, he has seen all kinds of strange things. The unawakened citizens who wear Stardust Necklaces and live in Field Dungeons are also in a mysterious sight, and now even the magic beasts are moving around with implanted Star Pieces.



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"Antares! Do you know anything about those variants?"

"Beep?.... Hmm."

Suho's question suddenly made Ragnar's gaze turn solemn. There was a disapproving look on his cute face.

"It bears a great shame on the dragonfolk for such half-pennies to be born."

"Half pennies?"

The emotion that rose in Antares' eyes as he looked at the dragons, or rather, the mutants, was one of unmistakable displeasure, contempt. "They're not dragons born in a normal way. Someone must have found a hidden lair of undeveloped dragon eggs."

"Underdeveloped eggs..."

[Young Lord, You don't think that...]

Suddenly, Suho and Beru looked at each other, and the same thought popped into their minds.

"Could they have been the ones my mother found?"

[It's likely they were the eggs of the dragon race, who were left without a single substance.]

A large number of dragon-type eggs that Cha Hae-In and Sirka found in the Tombs of Dragons. Except for the small egg from which Ragnar was born, all the others banished as soon as they were touched.

"...They were born there?"

"Rather than being born, someone must have extracted the dragon energy from the egg and infused it into other races. It's called 'forced evolution.'" Antares looked very uncomfortable. No matter how much he cared about anything other than destruction and ruin, it was a matter of pride for dragons like him to be treated as test subjects by someone. "How **dare** they."

Antares' gaze turned to the mutants, his eyes were brutal. Suho nodded at the sight and looked forward, his eyes flashing as he looked around at the area that was being destroyed by a natural disaster.

"Alright. Let's find out what's going on in this country once we've sorted out this mess. Harmakan."

[Yes my lord?]

It was Harmakan, the shadow who rose from the floor at the call of Suho. "Capture all the mutants. And tell me in what kind of state they are..."

[To study them thoroughly.]

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**Shaaa!**

Harmakan immediately sped toward the mutants. At the same time, Suho exclaimed. "Sillad!"

[The King Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch keeps an eye on you.]

Suho felt the gaze of the presence and spoke proudly. "Trigger Frigid Blizzard."

**FWOOSH!**

At that moment, a real natural disaster had appeared in this land.

[Use 'Skill: Frigid Blizzard'.]

[Mana Required: 100 per second.]

The freezing blizzard that had turned Ireland into an ice city had swept over India.

**Kwooooooooooooo**

"Kieek!" Suddenly, the frantic mutations began to freeze. Even Liu Zhigang was not immune from the powerful blizzard that covered the entire area.

['Debuff: Frost Curse' is applied.]

[-30% Attack Speed.]

[-30% movement speed.]

"...He is much more vicious than I thought. Whether his men get caught up or not, he's using an AoE<sup>(1)</sup> skill like this." Liu Zhigang's brow furrowed, mistaking Greed and the mutants for being in the same band as Suho. But the decision was quick. "Hit the bottom line of all this!" His new form shot straight through the blizzard and toward the Suho.

**¡BOOM!**

Before he knew it, the two horns of Volkan in Suho's hands collided with Liu Zhigang's sword qi.

[Young Lord!]

"Stay!" <sup>(2)</sup>

Suho discouraged Greed from coming to his aid. His gaze deepened as he made eye contact with Liu Zhigang.

"The Apostle of Itarim..." Is it because of the blizzard? Right now, the scene of 'that time' was unfolding in Suho's mind. The moment when his mother, Cha Hae-in, slashed the Apostle of Itarim with a single sword. That beautiful and wondrous power. *'What would it be*

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*like now?* Exciting. He wondered. Now that the level is higher than it was back then. He wondered if he could reach his mother with his power now.

Therefore, *'I'll use all my power!!'*

—————!

Finally, the power of Suho collided with that of Liu Zhigang. With its immense power, a frigid blizzard roared relentlessly, shaking the whole world. And behind him...

"..." Antares the dragon stared at Suho in silence with a cold stare. From start to finish. Without taking his eyes off it even once....**Smirk.**

A faint smile appeared on his lips. "For a novice, you are not so bad."

The wind stopped.

—————

1: Area of Effect

2: Literal translation is just "그리드!" which is Greed's name, but i thought it would be confusing since usually you call on someone's name *for* help, in english at least.

## 206

A land melted by the blizzard.

“...” In the center of the massive crater, Liu Zhigang sat helplessly, his limbs drooping. His body was completely exhausted, but the faint smile at the corners of his mouth made him look so relaxed.

*'How refreshing.'* Finally, his inner demons were gone. This was the result of draining the ominous mana that had been tormenting him endlessly for the past two years. Of course, the relief was temporary, but the pain seemed to have finally been washed away from the terrible headache he had endured. "Yes, I had to fight an S-rank from the beginning."

Due to various political reasons, Liu Zhigang never had the chance to go all out against any S-rank hunters. If two S-ranks from the same country fought for their lives, it would be a national loss, and if you fought against another country's S-rank, it would be a war in itself. But today he was really lucky. "I never thought I'd run into an S-rank villain in a place like this."

*'...And lose.'*

**Cough.**

Suddenly, blood spewed out of Liu Zhigang's mouth. Of course, he'd be lying if he said he didn't have any regrets. There were too many of them. *'If I knew it would be like this, I would have saved my energy a bit.'*

*'If I had fought again when I was in the best of shapes, the outcome might have been a little different...'*

*'But, if I had won, I wouldn't have been able to shake off all of my inner demons as I did now...'* A lot of thoughts flowed like a beacon of realization in just one breath. But one thing was certain. He could afford to indulge in these extravagant feelings, and his life was still hanging around his throat.

“...To have mercy on the tip of your sword.” Suddenly, Liu Zhigang's tired eyes glared into the eyes of Suho, who was looking down at him. "Why don't you kill me? Aren't you a villain?" Suho took full advantage of his straight gaze and turned to Ryo Singh, who was approaching from behind.

"Ryo Singh, translate."

"Yes. Thank you for saving me."

“...?”

So short? For a moment, Suho looked suspiciously at Ryo Singh's interpreting skills. But even with that gaze, Ryo Singh just nodded confidently.

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"Hmm, Suho really is amazing. I can't believe you were strong enough to beat Liu Zhigang by yourself."

"...He was tired from the start which is why I won so easily."

"Too much humility becomes deception. When you return to Korea this time, you must be re-evaluated. If they were to hear that the man who defeated Liu Zhigang is only a C rank, it would be a great disgrace to Liu Zhigang."

Even as he spoke, Ryo Singh had a somewhat regretful expression. It was only today that he was convinced that Suho was a hunter who can constantly grow. *'If the world finds out about this, they will be shocked. Hmm. Should I take this opportunity to change guilds? Of course, Suho won't mind an elite like me, and if I join now, at least I can become vice guild master in no time...'* Leaving Ryo Singh to reconsider his thoughts. Suho grabbed the Spring Water from the Echo Forest and approached Liu Zhigang.

"What's this— **Gulp, gulp.**" Liu Zhigang, who was completely exhausted, had no choice but to obediently accept the mysterious potion and drink it. The effect was immediate.

¡Aa!

"...?!" Liu Zhigang couldn't help but be taken aback when he suddenly saw a pair of blue wings spread out on both sides of his back. The true nature of his inner demons, who had been tormenting him for so long, was finally revealed.

[Aaaahh!!]

Presently an ashen angel with outstretched blue wings fell from his back, screaming in agony. But the energy he felt from it was quite different from that of Thomas Andre. Like Liu Zhigang, the ashen angel, exhausted from all strength, flapped his wings desperately to escape from this place.

[Don't let it fly away, young lord!]

¡Boom!

Before Beru could finish speaking, the hand of Suho snapped at its neck, as if it had been waiting for this moment.

Ring!

[You have killed the Apostle of Itarim.]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

[Level Up!]

"Oh great!" With a series of messages, Suho, who had been quite exhausted, returned to his perfect condition. However, the situation was the same for Liu Zhigang. The dust of light

from the shattering of the ashen angel's body seeped back into Liu Zhigang's body. Suddenly, his eyes filled with astonishment. '*...What are these memories?*' The remnants of the Apostle of Itarim, which had melted into Liu Zhigang's body for the past two years— who had rejected Itarim's power— revived the memories of his past life that he had forgotten until now.

—————!

Two lifetimes. Two memories. The shock of them colliding with each other in Liu Zhigang's mind was indescribable. But. '*...So that's how it is.*' He quickly accepted it. The shock was great, but the relief that followed was greater. Presently a cheerful smile escaped his lips.

"Yes. I was stronger than I am now. It wasn't just vain ambition that I was chasing." China's one and only 7-star hunter. A state-powered hunter who tore off the limbs of a giant demon beast that crossed the sea to China. '*...That was me, Liu Zhigang.*'

Liu Zhigang muttered in vain. "I can see why the inner demons came and went..." Now that he had figured out the cause, he was relieved. And he knew what he had to do. "All that's left is hard work." Of course he knows. Training doesn't increase your strength as a Hunter. However, when he felt the "remnants of the Apostle" that had just permeated his body, he had a vague feeling that perhaps he could reach a level similar to that time.

"Can I get a hand?" Liu Zhigang reached for Suho. He didn't know the language, but Suho understood what he was trying to say, and obediently grabbed his hand, lifting him to his feet.

"Interpreter, will you translate my words for this young man?" At Liu Zhigang's request, Ryo Singh nodded with a determined look. As a key member of the Asura Guild, he didn't feel hurt by being treated as an interpreter.

On the contrary, he wondered if there could ever be another honor as important as this one! '*This is the first conversation between China's Liu Zhigang and the man who single-handedly defeated him. This historic moment is being achieved entirely through my intercession!*' From now on, the conversation between the two of them could be written in history books. Ryo Singh swallowed dryly, straining his eyes and ears as if he didn't want to miss a single word. Meanwhile, Liu Zhigang stared intently at Suho's face, and then smiled. '*...How could this young man be so strong?*' Now that he sees it, isn't this boy quite similar to someone he knows? Liu Zhigang suddenly remembered his past life, and he had a lot of questions to ask, but he decided to ask the most curious and important one first.

"I'll ask. Where is your father and what is he doing?"

"Ryo Singh, interpret."

"... Suho, don't get me wrong, listen."

"What?"

*Gulp.*

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Ryo Singh interpreted Liu Zhigang's words with a face that was more serious and desperate than ever. "Liu Zhigang is suddenly asking how your father is, which is grammatically a very severe insult in Korea, but in China, it is possible that it is a genuine expression of greetings..."

"..." Lately, Ryo Singh has been improving his Korean language. As expected, it was the ability of the Asura Guild's core talent.

\* \* \*

"...Indeed. I get it." Liu Zhigang had a long conversation with Suho as he nodded seriously. There was a minor(?) accident in the middle where the interpreter was surprised to hear that time had been turned back, but it was also not incomprehensible if it were considered as a special 'skill'. More important was the current situation. "In any case, there is a high probability that Siddharth Bachchan fell into his inner demons like me."

To be precise, it was different from his own possession, but the reason was the same. What mattered was that Siddharth Bachchan didn't seem to have struggled to shake off the inner demons like he did. "Back then, our National Level hunters were comrades who fought together against a formidable foe called Kamish. There are some guys who didn't get along with each other until the end simply due to their personalities, but I still know what kind of person they are." Liu Zhigang smiled bitterly and continued.

"Me and Thomas Andre, in particular, were fighting chickens that the whole world recognized. Well, that's when we were both in our prime at least. I can't say it's the same now." Liu Zhigang and Thomas Andre were once praised as the strongest forces of mankind, and their personalities were also very aggressive. "But Siddharth Bachchan... He is good, unlike us."

"Good?" Liu Zhigang nodded at Suho's rebuttal.

"Yes. Hypocrisy is good."

"Hypocrisy?"

"Hypocrisy indeed!"

"Our Guildmaster isn't like that... Um, is that right?"

Ryo Singh, who was interpreting, momentarily bristled one moment and then deflated the next. Suddenly, he remembered the smiling face of the man who had demoted his capable and loyal subordinate.

"Well, actually, most humans are similar more often than not. When they acquire too much wealth and fame, they get drunk and lose themselves. And that's true for military power." Liu Zhigang smiled bitterly and thought of the hunters he had seen countless times in his past and present lives. "And Siddharth Bachchan among them... How can I put this? He was kind of stricken with a 'Savior Complex.'"

"Savior Complex?"

"Yes. They say that with great power comes great responsibility, and so they want to help people as much as possible. They say it's a force for good, but sometimes it's just a desire for honor." Ryo Singh's expression became a little complicated by the scathing assessment that followed.

The head of the Asura Guild and one of India's leading figures, Siddharth Bachchan. In fact, he was known as a good man who worked harder than anyone else to save the common people, but Ryo Singh, who had been by his side for a while... He was also someone who knew a little more about him than others.

"...He is driven by his desire to elevate himself, and just wants to intervene in other people's lives as he pleases. He doesn't care about the wishes of the parties involved."

And before the words ended.

[Master, after studying the mutants...]

Harmakan came to his side, pointed to the mutants he had captured, and reported what he had discovered.

[By all appearances, it looks like these guys were all human.]

"What?" At that, Suho's eyes widened as he stared at the mutants. "They're human? Are you sure?"

[Yes, I'm sure, it's a hybrid created by injecting hemolytic blood into living humans using Star Pieces as a medium.]

".....!" Suho realized what the hypocrite Siddharth Batchan is doing on earth right now.

[Apparently he is trying to force awakening the humans who have not awakened.]

**Quiiiiiiiii!!!**

Mutants, humans whose reason had collapsed and had been reduced to a single magical beast, were screaming desperately.

***....I beg you to kill me.***



# 207

Suho's expression hardened. Right now, the state of Manipur has a population of 3 million. At first, he was worried that all of them would turn into Mist Burns and die, but it turned out that the problem was even more serious. *'In a worst-case scenario, all three million could turn into mutants.'* Either way, the loss of 3 million people is the same. However, the problem was that, unlike Mist Burns, which dissipates over time, mutants had the potential to leave this dungeon and expand their damage.

Also, even if it was only half-hearted experiments, the danger of the dragons was nothing compared to that of a Mist Burn. If all of this was really Siddhart Bachchan's plan, it was horrible. It had to be stopped.

"Harmakhan, how do you turn them back into people?"

[Unfortunately, this is not possible.]

"Antares, what about you?" At Suho's question, Antares shook his head firmly.

"It's impossible. In the first place, they infused dragon blood into the bodies of other races that were not dragons, it is a wonder that their bodies have not yet been destroyed."

[That's right, it seems that the Star Pieces implanted in their bodies are forcibly blocking the fatal side effects, and their intellect has collapsed due to the immense pain of the process, even at this moment.]

"..."

**Kieeee!!**

**Kyaaaaa!!**

As he listened to their explanations, his gaze shifted silently to the mutants who were screaming under Harmakan's spells.

[My lord, there is no other way for them than to kill them as soon as possible, death is their only salvation.]

At Beru's words, Suho nodded silently. At that moment, Harmakhan's spell destroyed the Star Pieces embedded in the mutants' bodies.

**¡Boom!**

**Zeng!**

**Zeng!**

The moment when the blue gems are shattered and scattered everywhere, the mutants collapse on the spot of their demise.

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[Defeated Mutant No. 8.]

[Defeated Mutant No. 8.]

[Defeated Mutant No. 8.]

[Defeated Mutant No. 8.]

.....

There were no additional level-ups. But Suho looked down at the mutants' fragmented corpses with a more frightened expression than ever.

[Targets that can be cast with shadow extraction.]

[Targets that can be cast with shadow extraction.]

He's glad he could. Their lives have been tainted by intellect, but their souls have not been tainted. After a moment of contemplation, Suho reached for their shadows.

"I'll give you a chance. If you want to take revenge on yourself with your own hands... **Arise.**"

Awaken!

At that one word, the wailing of the poor souls who had been reduced to mutants began to echo in the air.

**Aahh!!**

"!!!" Liu Zhigang's eyes widened at this. If it had been before the memories of his previous life returned, he would have mistaken it for the power of an ominous demon again. But now it was different. *'Did you inherit your father's skills?'* Sung Jin-Woo's skills, which he had always been eyeing in his previous life, were unfolding right in front of him!

**Shwaaaaa!!!**

Soon, in front of Liu Zhigang, a large number of Shadow Soldiers stood up.

[Shadow Infantry Lv.1]

[Shadow Infantry Lv.1]

[Shadow Infantry Lv.1]

.....

The souls of those who had shed the name of mutants through death knelt solemnly before Suho and bowed their heads. "Guide me." In their ears came the chilling voice of Suho. "To the bastards that made you like this." The shadow infantrymen, trembling at his gruesome rage, reared their heads again and scrambled to their feet. From their raised heads, hot tears were streaming down their eyes, endlessly.

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\* \* \*

Imphal. The capital and largest city of Manipur, was a mixture of traditional Indian buildings and modern residential facilities. With beautiful natural scenery overlooking the shores of Loktak Lake in the distance, the city is a complex mix of extremely modern multi-storey apartments and commercial buildings. Even though it was now part of Loktak Field, there were still a lot of people living there in the same way as before.

"Master, are you going to just stand by and watch?"

"Why? what's wrong with you now?"

"The Asura Guild. Even in such a situation, this city is still under the jurisdiction of our Imphal Guild."

"...And what do you plan to do about it?"

Ali Hassan, the Guildmaster of the Imphal Guild, muttered to himself as he chewed on the cigarette in his mouth at the words of the Vice-guildmaster. "You know this already. If it weren't for Stardust, this city would have collapsed soon."

"Would it have though? Either way, if it wasn't for Stardust, we'd all move to another city a long time ago."

"That's exactly what I mean."

"It's practically like it has collapsed either way..."

"Oh just shut up." Ali Hassan, who had dismissed the Vice-guildmaster's words, had a crumpled expression.

At present, the Imphal Guild had lost its entire territory to a large guild called the Asura Guild. It was definitely a bad situation, but he had to admit it. Stardust distributed by the Asura Guild. The mysterious necklace was a great thing that kept civilians from turning into Mist Burns when they inhaled the Blue Mist. It was an undeniable truth that thanks to Stardust, Imphal people were still able to live their daily lives in the city.

...But.

"Still, there's something wrong here."

"Ah, so does the Guildmaster agree with me?"

"..." Ali Hassan stared out the window in silence. The city is uglier than it used to be.

A faint Blue Mist spreads over it. Outside the Imphal Guild's building, the atmosphere was clearly different from what it had been. It's clear that Stardust has allowed people to live their daily lives as before, but why is this city getting quieter every day? It's like a ghost town in a third-rate horror movie. And one more thing. "Why... have the Asura bastards still not been able to conquer this dungeon?"

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"That's exactly what I mean! They managed to capture the first one, but after that, it feels like They're just dragging their feet." Siddharth Bachchan, the master of the Asura Guild, was a recognizable powerhouse in India. In spite of his own initiative, the Loktak Fields, including Imphal, were still shrouded in Blue Mist. "If they were going to drag it out like this, at least they could have let us attack from the beginning!"

"I do as well, so shut up. You have a problem in only choosing the words that suit you."

"Ugh. I'm sorry, but in the first place, this is our jurisdiction, and it's so frustrating to just look around with a gate in front of you and be incapable of doing something."

"..."

Ali Hassan wordlessly spat his cigarette on the floor and smashed it with his foot. *'...I'm not so easily fooled, you know.'* If this is also some kind of tyranny in part of the large company, then keep it coming. In the name of the safety of the citizens, the Asura Guild proudly took away all the offensive rights from the Imphal Guild. The Imphal Guild could not make any protest against him. All three million citizens whose lives were saved by Stardust welcomed the Asura Guild's intervention with open arms.

As a result, the Imphal Guild has become such a slap in the face. Of course, that didn't mean there wasn't a lot of work to be done. In any case, the whole area had been turned into a den of demons, and it was the duty of the Imphal Guild to stand guard from time to time to prevent the beasts from approaching the people. But how long will this last? Eventually, unless someone stepped inside the gate and tackled the dungeon, the city of Imphal would never be able to escape from the Field Dungeon. Yes, so to speak....*'It means that from now on, this city must live under the care of the Asura Guild forever. If it's not even a city-state, what's this supposed to be?'*

It was then. "Master!" Suddenly, there was a small commotion outside the building, and an employee hurriedly opened the door to the boss's office. "It's a big deal! I think you'll have to come out!"

"Why? Did any magic beasts show up again?" As he spoke, Ali Hassan tilted his head. If a pack of magic beasts had appeared, their characteristic mana would have been felt long ago. However, there was no such sign, and the expression on the face of the employee who came to visit him was different altogether. "What the hell is going on...."

**Bang!**

Suddenly, the door slammed into the employee's office, and someone stepped into the boss's office.

"Who are you?!"

"You bastard!"

Startled, Ali Hassan and the Vice-guildmaster were instantly ready for battle, glaring at the uninvited guest who had burst in unannounced. *'Is he a villain? Or from a gang?'* Whatever it was, it was ridiculous. No matter how much the Imphal Guild's reputation has declined, what kind of madman thought it was good to have invaded his Guild?

"Hmm."

".....?" Something was wrong. An uninvited visitor to the Imphal Guild checked the identity of the people in the boss's office and tilted his head.

"Are you sure this is the right place? I don't think they're from a Foreign Religion."

"What did he say? Which country does he come from?" As unfamiliar words spilled out of the uninvited guest's mouth, Ali Hassan glanced back at the Vice-guildmaster while being wary of him.

"It's a language I don't know." The Vice-guildmaster shook his head hastily. Well, if you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.<sup>(1)</sup> The Vice-guildmaster jumped out at the uninvited guest with a grim expression.

"I'll call an interpreter once I've subdued him! Who the hell are you, and how dare you break into our guild!—"

"No, wait...!" Ali Hassan hurriedly reached out to dissuade him, but it was too late.

**Bang!**

"Cough!--"

Ali Hassan sighed as he watched the Vice-guildmaster bounce off the wall helplessly.

"...You have to seize up your opponent and *then* attack him." Who is to blame? It was the Vice-guildmaster's fault for his lack of ability to read his opponent's senses.

**Gulp.**

Ali Hassan swallowed hard and calmly pulled up the magic power in his body. But ignorance is brave, and you see as much as you know. He didn't have the courage to rush forward like his unsightly stunned comrade. *'...Strong. I can't fathom just how strong he is. Could he possibly be S-rank?'*

Ali Hassan was the master of a guild, and he had met S-rank hunters a few times in his life. But he was sure that none of the S-rank Hunters he knew were anything like this. *'Who the hell is this?'* And then, unexpectedly.

"What? They're not even wearing necklaces, are they? Are you sure it's them?"

Suddenly, another uninvited guest stepped into the president's office with an expression on his face.

"!!!"

A white-haired old man who speaks Chinese. The moment he saw his face, Ali Hassan's eyes widened as if they were about to pop out. "Liu— Liu Zhigang?!" There is no hunter in the world who doesn't know Liu Zhigang's face. China's one and only 6-star Hunter. Even though he has

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such overwhelming power, he is always wandering aimlessly, looking for a battle. Why did the great Liu Zhigang suddenly appear in this city?

There was something that confused Ali Hassan even more.

"Hmm. So what are you going to do now?"

"!?!“ Even the Chinese government did not dare to stand in his way, and yet the terrifying Sword Demon Liu Zhigang was like a gentle lamb, politely addressing the young man who came in first! Ali Hassan was stunned by the sight.

"What the hell is going on...?"

---

1: The real idiom here is 머리가 나쁘면 몸이 고생하면 되는 법 and its literal translation is "If one's mind is bad, then one must suffer physically" which is often used to refer that if someone lacks intelligence or makes poor decisions, they will inevitably face the consequences or hardships physically. I changed it to another idiom which is more commonly used in english instead.

# 208

Ali Hassan, 30 years old. He was originally from a beggar in the back alleys of Imphal.

But life comes in many wonders Inshallah! <sup>(1)</sup>

He was a beggar, but at the same time as the cataclysm, he suddenly awakened as a B-rank hunter, and his life changed 180 degrees.

He was now Ali Hassan, the master of the Imphal Guild, representing the Imphal where he had been born and raised. Of course, even now, he sometimes has nightmares about his days as a beggar, but when he opens his eyes, he is happy to return to a reality that has become as happy as a lie.

So why?

Even throughout all those horrible years as a beggar, he had a premonition that this was going to be the longest day of his life.

"Ryo Singh, please interpret."

"Oh, Namaste. Thank you for your hard work, please don't panic, this is just how we do things around here."

"..."

Ryo Singh sticks his face out from behind, as if waiting for Suho's call. Like a skilled salesman, he approached Ali Hassan and held out his business card. Hassan's eyes widened as he looked at his business card.

"Asura Guild?! Are you from the Asura Guild?" In the middle of the business card, the name "Asura Guild" that took over Imphal was inscribed proudly. This business card is the honor of the family that has firmly supported Ryo Singh over the years...

**Rip.**

"Haha. I don't care about that anymore, just remember my name."

"!?!!" Ryo Singh committed the barbaric act of coolly tearing up his business card, which he usually offered, into tiny pieces. The reason, of course, was that he had succeeded in changing jobs. Ryo Singh, who managed to get permission from Suho on the way here, greeted them with his hands clasped together like a majestic but humble celebrity.

"Let me greet you again. My name is Ryo Singh, a former A-rank hunter of the Asura Guild and now an interpreter, plus a new employee of the current Woojin Guild. I'm going to be a vice president soon."

"...The Woojin Guild?"

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"Was there such a guild?"

The hunters of the Imphal Guild whispered to one another. At least in India, it was a name none had ever heard of. Ryo Singh naturally elaborated.

"Alas, of course you don't know. Our Woojin Guild is from Korea."

"Korea?"

"Yes, as you can see, it's the strongest guild in Korea."

*'Korea's Strongest?!'* With the last explanation, Ryo Singh's gaze briefly stared at Liu Zhigang, who was behind him with his arms folded, which was quite a deliberate gesture. And the intention was very successful. *'Wait, no way...?'* As soon as Ali Hassan's gaze turned to Liu Zhigang, who had been confused for a long time, there was a powerful alarm in his mind.

"So then, that crazy old man— No, I mean, Liu Zhigang is also a member of the Woojin Guild..."

"Hush. I don't think that's something I dare to mention because it's a secret. Do you understand what I mean? Hahaha."

"Uh-huh?!" Ryo Singh's suspicious squinting of one eye said a lot. Ali Hassan, who had guessed what the secret was, covered his mouth with both hands and shuddered. *'Wait, really? Liu Zhigang joined the guild? Is that also in a guild in another country?'* Good lord. He felt like he had discovered a huge secret.

Who is that mad old man! Sword Demon Liu Zhigang! He was the pride and pride of China, and the only Six-Star hunter who enjoyed the utmost favoritism of the Chinese government. That Liu Zhigang suddenly joined a certain guild? Is that also in a guild in another country? Does the Chinese government know this? No, it can't be. There is no way China can stand idly by and watch the situation where its representative hunters are stolen from other countries. *'No, wait! That's not what matters right now!'* Suddenly, Ali Hassan realized something even more shocking, and his gaze hurriedly turned to Su Ho instead of Liu Zhigang.

"So this young guy has Liu Zhigang as his subordinate, right?! Who the hell is this hunter?"

"...?" Ali Hassan's ghostly reaction only bewildered Suho. However, Liu Zhigang, who could only speak simple Arabic, looked at Ryo Singh disapprovingly from behind.

"Hey, when did I say I'd join the Woojin Guild?"

"Oh, senior! Ha ha ha! When do you say I said that? But if you'll excuse me, wouldn't it be easier to work like this?"

Liu Singh's willingness to openly use his name value made Liu Zhigang click his tongue.

"What a snake. You'd be better suited to be a politician than a hunter."



"Haha. Thanks for the compliment. That just means I'm doing a good job."

"No, quite the opposite. If you're going to use my name in vain, then you are not doing it to the full extent."

"Huh?"

Liu Zhigang, who had been quietly observing the situation, suddenly folded his arms and stepped forward. Then his momentum began to grow.

**!!!Goooooooo!!!**

“!!!”

“!?!”

All the hunters in the Imphal Guild, including Hassan, looked up at Liu Zhigang, shivering, as if they were in front of a giant. Liu Zhigang, accustomed to this kind of treatment, ordered them with a very arrogant smile on his lips. "I, Liu Zhigang, will ask. Those who don't want to answer should come forward now. See if they truly dare to go against me."

!!!

The moment they heard those words, they felt a chill in his throat.

Ryo Singh had forgotten it. The true meaning of the name Liu Zhigang. He's... Not only his fighting ability, but also his unique personality is at the level of Thomas Andre. So far, no one, including the Chinese government, has dared to stop what he has set his mind to. And from his mouth fell a solemn order, almost a death sentence.

"From now on, tell me all that you have done on earth. And if you so much as utter a single lie.." But Liu Zhigang wasn't the only one here. Suddenly, Liu Zhigang paused and glanced at Suho's face next to him. Then he turned his head again, looked ahead, and smiled meaningfully. "... No, it doesn't matter if there is a lie. After all, even after you're dead, you'll eventually tell the truth."

**Chills!**

Liu Zhigang's 'sincere' words made the hunters' spines wet with cold sweat. They saw it, too. Liu Zhigang stared at him briefly. A long black shadow stretched beneath his feet.

**Ahhhhh!**

Beyond them, in the depths of the abyss, the ominous black demons were watching them, tears of sorrow.

\* \* \*

After interrogating Ali Hassan, Suho was able to uncover a lot of information about the Asura Guild. "...I thought Siddharth Bachchan would be here, but they aren't even affiliated with the foreign believers."

[It seems that they are all ignorant errand boys.]

The Shadow Infantrymen that Suho reaped were the victims of the experiments conducted here with Mutant 8. So, when he was guided by them, he found that the Imphal Guild was just an ordinary place. "The Asura Guild has been treating all the small guilds in Imphal like this."

"It's a subcontractor, but really it's just an unpaid errand boy."

"They have a noble cause for the city, and we have no choice but to do what they tell us to do."

One of the most common things the Imphal Guild did at the behest of the Asura Guild was to distribute Stardust, or Stardust Necklaces, to the citizens of the city. The reason for this is, of course, that the number of citizens is so large, and the expensive Asura Guild members can't make a margin to move directly, so they treat all the hunters in the area like pawns. But one thing. There was something strange.

"By the way." Among the members of the Imphal Guild, who were scrambling to answer all of Suho's questions, Ali Hassan spoke cautiously.

"I don't think Stardust is 100 percent effective."

"What do you mean?"

"I come from the back alleys, and the slums tend to be a bit scruffy. But somehow, a lot of the beggars who got Stardust didn't show up one day."

Suho's eyes lit up coldly at that. "... People are missing?"

"Yes, of course, if you don't see the beggars, you would usually report it to the city hall, but I was a little nervous. Are there any side effects to Stardust?" Ali Hassan, who was answering without hesitation, suddenly felt a strange gaze. For some reason, the dark demons have been staring at them from the shadows of Suho all along... It was strangely familiar. *'Maybe I'm just thinking too much?'*

But Suho had a different idea. The Shadow Soldiers are of low rank and cannot speak, but he knows what their gaze means. "Did they secretly kidnap the poor and experiment on them? So the reason why you led me here..."

[I think it's because he's from the same slums, so he's the only one they can trust.]

"Does that mean that you can't trust the other guilds that have been subcontracted by the Asura Guild?" After thinking about this, Suho nodded and immediately stood up. "Alright then. Let's start here." He turned to Liu Zhigang and Ryo Singh, who were just waiting for their decision. "Before I meet Siddharth Batchan, I need to find out exactly what the Asura Guild's plans are."

"What do you mean?"

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"From now on, I'm going to hit all the Hunter Guilds in Imphal."

**Hehe.**

At that, Liu Zhigang clenched his fists and smiled fiercely. "Well, that's enough for us to split up and move around. Can I kill them if they resist?"

"I'll leave it up to you to judge. Just leave the corpses behind if you do."

"Yes." Ryo Singh swallowed silently as the two men exchanged glances between his interpreters.

Today. Two nightmares have come to the city of Imphal.

\* \* \*

**Ahhhh!**

*'...It's raining.'*

From shady alleyways. A small boy stepped into the humid air behind the buildings of Imphal, looking up at the sky and breathing heavily. His clothes were drenched from the damp rain, but he had no intention of escaping and no energy to do so. No, that's rather good. There was nothing like this in the position of being hunted.

*'...The rain will wash away the smell of my blood.'*

He'd blamed God all his life, but at least for this moment, he'd never felt so grateful. The boy forced himself to his feet. The pain from the wound was enough to bring tears to his eyes, but he gritted my teeth and held back the tears. *'God... Please...'* The boy swallowed his tears and prayed more desperately than ever. *'Please help me...No, it's okay even if it's someone other than God, just please..... Save me.'* The boy limped on one leg and slowly disappeared into a dark alleyway.

**Splash!**

Hideous reptilian paws stepped into the alleyway, stepping through puddles of rainwater. They sniffed, looked around, and muttered softly.

"There's no trace here."

"They are lucky. The smell of blood was clouded by the rain." <sup>(2)</sup>

**Grrrrrrr!**

Then there was a flash of thunder, and their hooded faces were pressed deep into the air, revealing for a glimpse. Lizardmen. No, rather, it's a hybrid that looks like a human. The corners of their mouths clenched long, and their hideous tongues flickered as they closed their mouths.

"I don't think it's gone too far yet, anyway. Find him."

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[I found them.]

"You found them— What?" Their heads turned back involuntarily, following the sudden sound of voice. From there ... A sinister black shadow loomed over the walls of the dark alleyway, smiling at them.

"!?!"

-----

1: As Allah wills it. A phrase commonly used in Islam.

2: In case people are wondering. While rain may have some ability to diminish or mask odors, it may not completely eliminate the smell of blood, especially in situations where the blood is prominent.

## 209

Someone said something along the lines of:

*'The greatest luxury is giving!'*

In that sense, Ali Hassan was one of the most extravagant people. Ali Hassan, who grew up in the slums, used to visit the slums whenever he had time after his awakening. *'Wahaha! I'm here again! You bastards!'*

He didn't go empty-handed though. Every time he went, he brought a truckload full of bread. He squirmed at the beggars who looked up to him, sprinkling bread all over the place on the top of the truck. *'Hey, do you see! That's how rich I am! Eat this, you bastards! Uh-huh!'*

Good deeds? For noblesse oblige? He's never learned such difficult words. He just wanted to brag. Yes, that's why he started doing it. Even if he flexed a few trucks, it didn't compare to the amount of money the hunter was making in the dungeon. But no matter how much he boasted, there was one thing Ali Hassan would never do.

Give them food, but not money.

*'If we do that, they'll just fight each other. Rumors will come and other local thugs will flock here.'*

So he gave just enough to keep a stomach from being hungry in the nick of time. Just so that tomorrow's hunger will not be as scary as this evening. Ali Hassan, who knew the psychology of the slums better than anyone, knew the line of deprivation very well.

So why?

One day, the number of people in the slums began to dwindle. There was more and more bread left each day. By the time Ali Hassan found out, many of the beggars were already missing.

"...I didn't know if they had really gone missing, or if it was just a bunch of unlucky beasts roaming the backstreets."

"But I think I've found out why."

**Slice!**

"Kagh!"

Ali Hassan, who was explaining through Ryo Singh's interpretation, swallowed hard and looked forward. In front of him, a group of strapped dragonfolk lay face down in the mud. They were found by Beru in the back alleys of the slums.

Suho spoke, stomping on their skulls with his foot, looking down at them with a cold gaze. "I'll ask. Who are you?"

"Grrrrrrr."

Reptile-like eyes gazed at Suho with a smug expression. It looks like a mixture of a lizard and a human. Large Star Pieces were implanted in their bodies. He didn't have to bother to answer them, but his name was already in his sight.

[Variant No. 13]

[Variant No. 13]

"Since you are 13, you can talk. And it also means the experiment became an ongoing project."

"Tsk." Antares, who was riding on his shoulders at Suho's words, clicked his tongue in disapproval. Seeing them made it even clearer.

[The Beast Monarch, the King of Beasts, frowns as he recalls the humans who became werewolves who fed upon Grey's blood.]

"Yes. It's a similar situation to back then."

### **Grip.**

Suho tightened his grip on the mutants' heads, and questioned them. "Ryo Singh, translate. Are you with the Foreign Religion?"

"Gurrrrr I don't know!"

"Where have you been arresting people?"

"I don't know! We don't know anything!"

They snarled with venomous expressions, and blue blood flowed from their eyes. Iron, a former priest of the Foreign Religion, and Greed, a former high priest, recognized it and advised Suho.

[They are already firmly possessed by the Star Piece.]

[If their mind is contaminated to this extent, there is no choice but to kill them.]

Suho nodded and interrupted the useless conversation. "Got it. Then I'll directly ask your soul."

### **Slice!**

Without hesitation, Suho smashed their skulls and immediately extracted their shadows and turned them into soldiers. "Guide me to your home base."

\* \* \*

The dragonfolk, who had become Shadow Soldiers, obediently led Suho to their hideout.

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"Kubera Guild?" Ali Hassan, who was following Suho behind, had opened his eyes wide upon recognizing the place.

"Do you know this place?"

"I just know the name. It's a small guild of about 10 people." According to Ali Hassan's explanation, there are a total of 17 guilds operating in Imphal. With the exception of the Imphal Guild, the only medium-sized guild among them, the rest of the guilds were all small guilds with only about 10 members. Of course, it was not possible to gauge the strength of a guild simply by the number of guild members.

Like the Woojin Guild led by Suho, the Guildmaster has overwhelming skills that no one else can match. There were also a handful of elite guilds where individual guild members were as good as a single party. But even with all the incidents, there was no chance that Suho would be overwhelmed.

**Bang!**

Without even bothering to open the door, he smashed the wall and went inside.

"Who's there!"

"...."

While the mutants inside were startled and ready for battle, Suho's eyes went elsewhere.

"...Oh my God."

Ali Hassan slumped to the ground, his legs giving out.

A prison— No, a chicken coop. Along the cramped prisons, barred with flimsy iron bars, squalid beggars crouched alongside each other. And in their bodies were Star Pieces that seem to have been forcibly implanted on...

**Kieeee!**

The moment he witnessed them being trapped in a laboratory and their skin mutating like reptiles.

**Thump.**

One emotion vanished from within Suho.

"Harmakan."

[Yes, my lord.]

"Kill."

**Wooahh!**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[Harmakan has activated 'Instant Dungeon'.]

Harmakan immediately exterminated the hunters of the Kubera Guild and turned them into experience for Suho. He looked at Suho, checked on the condition of the detainees, and reported back to his lord.

[Fortunately, the majority of them haven't had the Star Pieces transplanted properly as of yet, there might be a possibility for me to recover them.]

"That's good." But Suho's stern expression showed no signs of fading. Ali Hassan said that the number of people held here was too small compared to those who disappeared from the ghetto. "I'm sure the same will be true for other small guilds! Our Imphal Guild is a medium-sized guild, but the rest of the smaller guilds have long since fallen under the umbrella of the Asura Guild."

"We don't have much time." Liu Zhigang's eyes, which had been silently watching all this devastation, were quietly glowing. Perhaps the reason why the current situation is so unpleasant is because it reminds him of his past life.

At least there was some romanticism back then when competition between guilds was fierce, but the premise was that all of humanity would work together to fight against the magic beasts.

But now...

"It's disgusting. Humans experimenting on their kind and turning them into magic beasts. It would be unthinkable in the past." Liu Zhigang drew his sword.

\* \* \*

**BANG!**

"Who are you?"

"Liu— Liu Zhigang?!" The hunters of Imphal's other small guild, the Lama Guild, were shocked to see the face of the rogue who suddenly burst into the office.

"I'll ask. Are you with the Foreign Religion?"

"...What's that?"

"You're late in answering. Would the loss of one of your arms speed up your answer?"

**Rumble.**

"!!!"

"AH, it 's really Liu Zhigang!"



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Seeing Liu Zhigang draw two blades, the hunters of the Lama Guild involuntarily looked into each other's eyes, and then began to flee in several directions at the same time. Behind them, however, was a long tail that resembled a lizard. Seeing this, Liu Zhigang nodded.

"A leg is better than an arm."

**Flash! Slice!**

**Ahh!!**

"My, my legs.....!"

Without hesitation, the sword slashed both legs of the fleeing hunters. Blood gushed out. Blue blood. These ones were no longer human. Liu Zhigang left the screaming people on the floor, and ran after the hunters who had fled in the opposite direction.

\* \* \*

Unlike Liu Zhigang, who showed his ruthless hand, Esil was relatively gentlemanly.

**Knock knock.**

"Excuse me. Is this the Chandra Guild?"

The demons were a race that could understand and communicate with them, and it was no different in India. Of course, simply being able to speak the language did not guarantee a smooth conversation. The door opened, and a hunter appeared, scanning Esil from top and bottom with a wary look.

"Yes, that's right. What have you come for?"

"Are you aware of the kidnappings of beggars around here?"

"...Why are you suddenly being so disrespectful?" <sup>(1)</sup>

"That necklace."

**¡Gooooooooo!**

As everyone now knows, the main ingredient in Stardust is demonic blood. Seeing the Stardust necklace around the hunters' necks, Esil's whole body exuded the majesty of a demon noble.

"Take off the necklace for yourself. If you don't, I'll judge you as part of the Foreign Religion."

"...Foreign Religion?"

"Or would you like to be called an Itarim's bastard?"

**Smirk.**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

The moment the word 'Foreign Religion' jumped out of Esil, the hunters' eyes were already tainted with a fierce aura. Their reptilian pupils appeared.

"Who the hell are you!?!"

Esil nodded seeing that the rest of the hunters rushed at her, so she revealed her bloodlust as well.

"I guess I can kill you all then."

**Slice! Slash! Slice!**

If Liu Zhigang was a ruthless swordmaster, then Esil was a demon, and not just any demon, but a demon of the purest lineage.

"AHHK—"

"SA— SAVE ME—!"

**Slash! Slash! Slice! Stab!**

Esil slew all those who resisted, and handed over their bodies to the Shadow Soldiers who followed her.

"Send them to Suho." She turned her head and sighed softly, looking at the secret space hidden in the corner of their hideout. "...And tell Harmakan that there are people who have been experimented on here, as well. ASAP."

\* \* \*

Swift and fast. How long did it take for Suho to rob all the small guilds operating in Imphal and wipe out all the hunters who had become part of the Foreign Religion? Half a day was enough. In the process, he ruthlessly killed those who resisted, and after that, he turned them into Shadow Soldiers and found hidden hideouts one after another. He succeeded in rescuing all the people who were trapped there and being experimented on.

Harmakhan's role here was crucial. Fortunately, most of the people who were still being tested were able to remove the Star Pieces from their bodies without difficulty. Harmakan explained why it was possible.

[In the first place, I assume the experiment itself is a process of adapting one's body to hemolysis and Star Pieces, and once the adaptation is complete, the results will come whether it succeeds or fails.]

And once the results were in, there was no need to lock them up any longer.

[If you fail, you'll become a demon without any reason, just like Mutant No. 8 when you first discovered them, and you'll be abandoned outside the city.]

"And if you succeed, will you be like these guys here?"

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

!!!

Was it because they made too much noise while trying to rescue people? Before they knew it, Suho found himself surrounded by countless members of the Dragonfolk.

"Where are all these guys hiding?" Liu Zhigang and Esil muttered as they drew their weapons, and Suho glared forward, his eyes flashing. Isn't it obvious?

A place where those who have successfully been implanted with a Star Piece feel the most comfortable.

"In the Void."

Apparently there is a Void Gate somewhere in this city.

-----

1: Esil dropped her formal speech tone (존댓말, jondaemal) to an informal one (반말, banmal)

As for some extra info: the Kubera name refers to Kubera the god of wealth, and the god-king of the semi-divine yakshas in Hinduism. The Lama name likely refers to the Dalai Lama title from Tibetan buddhism. And Chandra is the name of the Moon god in hindu.

# 210

In the back streets of Imphal. If you walk through the shadowy back alleys, disregarding the splendor of the downtown area, you will find a rundown village of old boards that wouldn't seem out of place, no matter how long you linger beyond them. A few years ago, businessmen came to this place, and a new sign was put up.

[Planned Redevelopment Site]

Now this shabby back alley has become a land of gold, just like the gorgeous front streets. However, if the redevelopment proceeds, the poor people living here will lose their homes and will have no choice but to end up on the streets. Naturally, those people protested, so the government and businessmen evicted them, either by persuading them or threatening them.

That was just three years ago.

Now all it took was to redevelop the city, but even the best businessmen could not have predicted the global natural disaster called "The Cataclysm."

The city of Imphal was turned into a field dungeon overnight. In the end, the investors' grandiose plans were completely delayed. Of course, the businessmen had no intention of sitting idly by. Time was money for businessmen so they couldn't put their trust in the hunters of Imphal to make a strategy on how to deal with the gate.

In the end, the businessmen decided to take some losses in unison. They entrusted a commission to the Asura Guild, India's strongest force, and decided that it would be cheaper to attack the dungeon as soon as possible rather than wait for the Imphal guilds to take care of it.

Siddharth Bachchan gladly accepted their invitation. On the surface, he was directly trying to save the poor citizens, but behind the scenes, the logic of capital was being applied thoroughly. And as the input was large, the output was also very satisfying.

As soon as Siddharth Bachchan was brought into the attack, one of the many gates at Loktak Field was quickly captured.

*'....So far, so good.'*

Manu Kijal, the governor of Manipur, who had negotiated between the businessmen and Siddharth Bachchan, was now biting his lips with an anxious expression.

**Snap.**

Until now, he used to feel peace when he touched the Stardust necklace around his neck like this, but today it felt different. *'How the hell did this happen?'*

Siddharth Bachchan had been stalling for a long time without attacking the rest of the dungeons at all. Of course, he would still lead his guild members in and out of the gates, but he already knew that the purpose was not to attack.

*'I don't know what the purpose of such an experiment is...'* While Manu Kijal didn't know the specific reason, he did know that Siddharth Bachchan was conducting some kind of biological experiment on Imphal. And that the subjects of the biological experiments are the poor of Imphal. As the governor who had to continue the redevelopment with the businessmen, this seemed like a fine solution to deal with the poor in advance, so Manu Kijal was aware of the fact but tolerated it until now.

And yet something held him back. *'These days, you've been giving me little orders here and there. As if you were the governor.'* The strategy was delayed, and the resentment of the businessmen was piling up, but it was somehow tolerable. Rather, what he was dissatisfied with was the way Siddharth Bachchan treated him. However, from the moment he turned a blind eye to Siddharth Bachchan's actions, he was also an accomplice. Now he could only wait for Siddharth Bachchan to get what he wanted, and to solve the field dungeon as promised.

**Woosh.**

Suddenly, a soft glow came from the necklace he was fiddling with. Then, like a lie, the discontent softened little by little. *'...Well, after all, what Siddharth Bachchan is doing isn't particularly bad for me.'* Good, this is good. The thought crept in naturally, and he finally nodded. *'Could it possibly be that the reason for the secret army through biological experiments is to make Manipur independent from India? Starting with Loktak Field. Imphal is going to be the capital of that independent state. And will that mean for me?'*

It was obvious.

*'King.'*

Suddenly, Manu Kijal's heart began to swell. Siddharth Bachchan possessed unrivaled force, but he was never a statesman. You need a politician to run the country. *'In the end, I'll be in charge of politics, and he'll take care of national defense...'* In other words, if Siddharth Bachchan's goal succeeds, he will become the head of an independent state, not just a governor!

Although the land they ruled was the same, the meaning of a governor and a king of a country were completely different. As he finished thinking about this, the corners of Manu Kijal's mouth crept up. He looked up proudly and looked forward again, and a blue essence flowed from his eyes. *'I get it now.'* In the distance of his vision, in front of him, there were foreign enemies in Imphal who had suddenly invaded and were slaughtering the hunters.

"Kill the invaders."

For our grand goals!

**Smirk.**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Manu Kijal, who continued his delusions as if he had lost his intellect, finally came to a decision that could not be understood with common sense.

"Ha, China's Liu Zhigang crossed the border and invaded Imphal? Kill him and his men with all your might!" Even if Liu Zhigang is a Six-Star hunter, he is also a human being with blood flowing after all. Keep pushing until you're exhausted, and you'll die one day!

"On the contrary, if it becomes known to the whole world that we killed Liu Zhigang with our own hands, from that moment on, we will be recognized as an independent country that no one can ignore!" Manu Kijal eventually declared an all-out war against the Liu Zhigang gang that was ravaging Imphal's guilds. The hunters they hunted were unfinished test subjects. Luckily, their egos didn't collapse, but they were half-mutants who only absorbed a few drops of hemolysis! But even Liu Zhigang would never be able to defeat the complete Dragonfolk Army!

"Kill them!"

**RAAAAHH!!**

\* \* \*

Suho healed a beggar kid they had picked up in the back alleys, who was found by Beru and learned about the events that were happening in the city. "So you don't know where Siddharth Bachchan is?"

"...No, I've been locked up in a cage all this time. All I know is that it's somewhere in the dungeons." As he answered the question, the boy was miraculously recovering from the healing potion. Born in the slums, this was seen as a divine blessing for him.

[Master, the Star Piece has been removed.]

Harmakhan's treatment had been completed, and the boy was able to return to his pre-experimental self. However, Harmakan himself healed the boy and found out why the hunters were after this little boy so much.

[This young human's constitution seems to be better suited to hemolysis than any test subjects we have found so far.]

"So you mean it was their favorite test subject."

[Yes, if he had stayed locked up, he would have successfully been turned as one of them.]

"..." With that, Suho turned his gaze and looked at the mutants that had suddenly swarmed towards them. Each one exudes at least the power of a C-rank, B-rank, or even more. That number is in the hundreds now. Even at this moment, considering the endless swarming, it seemed that there were more than a few thousand.

But the real frightening thing about them wasn't their numbers, but their intelligence, like the ice elves, unlike the beasts who were driven by instinct.

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"That's enough to overthrow a country. Siddhart, what the hell is this guy doing..." Liu Zhigang clicked his tongue. At this point, isn't it safe to assume that the Asura Guild was a large guild composed entirely of villains? And the fact that these new dragon folks had lost their humanity made them even more terrifying and destructive as a group.

However, to someone else, this situation was an extremely satisfying sight.

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, is hungry.]

[The King of Dragons, the Destruction Monarch, claims that absorbing dragon blood from their bodies will increase the amount of Ragnar's magic.]

And will also help in leveling up.

Suho's eyes flashed as he nodded at Antares' words. The job change quest to become the Destruction Monarch. Reaching level 100, which is the primary goal, may be possible by the end. Suho looked at the dragons as they attacked, and summoned all the soldiers, who had scattered and sought the Void Gate, into his shadow.

"Arise."

**Shwaaaaaa!!!**

At that moment, the Shadow Soldiers who rose from the shadow of Suho unleashed their momentum and overwhelmed the battlefield. Seeing the enormity, Liu Zhigang was shocked, even though he was on the same side. *'Holy fuck! So these weren't all the summons I've seen so far!'* Not to mention Greed, who he had met his own sword, and the momentum exuded by the other soldiers was unusual.

**Gulp.**

Liu Zhigang's throat grubbled and swallowed his dry saliva. More than anything else, he already knew. The true horror of Suho's summons. They were an immortal legion that could regenerate infinitely, no matter how much they were hurt. "What a frightening power."

Liu Zhigang had met Sung Jin-Woo in his previous life, but he had never truly witnessed his true face. That's why he was instinctively following Sung Jin-Woo's figure behind Suho's back. But one thing was for sure. "Compared to Sung Jin-Woo, you're still not strong enough."

They were even vastly outnumbered by the onslaught of enemies. Currently, there are only 50 of Suho's troops. It was the largest combined force of all the saved soldiers and the instant mercenaries he had recruited to get here.

It even included ordinary shadow infantrymen who had become soldiers themselves for revenge. On the other hand, the number of enemies that increase every moment is 20 or 30 times or more. With no idea how much Siddharth Bachchan, who must be lurking behind this, might have become stronger through the divinity of the outer universe, it was hard to guess the odds. At least from Liu Zhigang's point of view.

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But.

**Smirk.**

"We just need to make up for the lack of power."

[ Number of extractable shadows : 50/100 ]

[ Number of Saveable Shadows: 8/10 ]

"I've invested a bit in my intelligence."

And one more thing.

Weak soldiers can be strengthened!

"Harmakan! Strengthen the shadow infantrymen!"

[Yes! I'll activate the Death Knight's armor!]

The Death Armor, which Harmakan had developed in the past for the demonic specters, was summoned. The shadow infantrymen wore it willingly.

**RAAAAAHRRR!!!**

The original souls who had been reborn as shadows were still shedding tears in their armor. But all that grunge was directed at the dragonfolk who had experimented on them. At that moment. The shadow of Suho darkened all around.

[Use 'Skill: Monarch's Domain'.]

**Woosh!**

[Shadow Soldiers who fight on the caster's shadow have their stats increased by 50%.]

**RUAAAARRRRR!!!**

In his shadow, all the soldiers began to roar, swaying in a seething shiver. A full-scale war began.

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Amplify Damage'.]

[Harmakan uses 'Skill: Thorns of Pain'.]

[Increases the damage to those who receive the curse.]

[Normal attacks will also inflict fatal wounds.]

[Mirrors all pain and damage taken by Shadow Soldiers to the target they attack.]

The results were devastating.



[Link to Kakao Page](#)

[The King of Dragons, the Monarch of Destruction, bursts into a madness.]

[The King of Dragons, the Monarch of Destruction, hastens Ragnar.]

[The King of Snowfolk, the Frost Monarch, inflicts a blizzard of the bitter cold...]

"...Is this really Sung Jin-Woo's son?"

Liu Zhigang couldn't keep his mouth shut.

And neither could Governor Manu Kijal, who was watching the devastation from the top of a tall building in the distance, unable to come to his senses. "Wha— what is that?!"

This was happening in his own city... It was being devoured by evil spirits!

Without hesitation, he turned around and began to run away.

# 211

[Variant No. 17]

[Variant No. 26]

[Variant No. 31]

.....

The Asura Guild has been experimenting with a lot of things. There were many failures, but there were also some successes. The result of those were the enhanced humans, the Dragon Army.

"AKH!" Manu Kijal couldn't hide his confusion as he scrambled to escape. *'Nonsense! How could this happen!'* The Dragon Legion, which the Asura Guild had painstakingly developed, was gradually collapsing. No, the war would still prevail, that's for sure. But why? *'Why the hell are things going awry either way!'*

**AAAAHHHHH!!**

[Hahahahahaha!]

*'WHY WON'T YOU DIE?!'*

What kind of monsters are those? Even if they were torn limb from limb. Even if half of the body is torn off. Even if their whole throat is crushed! There were only a few dozen of them on the other side, but they were not dying at all! *'Nonsense! An army of immortality! Where did they come from?!?!'* And that wasn't the only problem.

-Arise!

**AAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!**

*'You damn necromancer! You've got all these deceptive skills!'* He really couldn't imagine it. At first, he thought Liu Zhigang was the problem, but as it turns out, the young guy was the biggest one here!

- Arise!

**KYAAAAAAA!!!!**

At the necromancer's command, the sight of souls formed from black steam leaping out of the corpses of the dragons was nothing short of terrifying.

"WA! What is that-!"

If this were a dream, there would be no nightmare that could compare it. The other side is immortal, while his own is resuscitated at the command of the enemy. They are taking away

his soldiers! How could such a petty and one-sided battle exist? *'Not good! If it's like this, they are bound to win!'*

In the end, there is only one way. Manu Kijal was a capable man by nature, and he desperately thought of a way to solve this impasse.

*'I must turn the tables! The principle of mana immutability! There could be no real Legion of the Undead in this world! It was clear that if the young necromancer was destroyed by a single blow- without having a chance to defend himself- with overwhelming power, he and his shadows would no longer be able to resurrect.'*

*'Siddharth has to take matters into his own hands! But that's exactly what they want now!'* Manu Kijal saw their schemes at a glance with brilliant intellect. *'That annoying necromancer is trying to disturb the situation and summon Siddharth. Liu Zhigang must be the countermeasure!'*

Apart from that. Perhaps this could be the beginning of China's plan to invade India. *'Liu Zhigang of China and Siddharth Bachchan of India. There's always been a question of who is stronger between the two.'* Of course, in the Hunter Rankings made by the U.S. Hunter Bureau, Siddharth Bachchan was ranked one step below Liu Zhigang. But Manu Kijal, who knew the hidden truth of Siddharth Bachchan, knew how meaningless the Hunter Rankings were.

*'Hah, China's Liu Zhigang is stronger? The people of the world are utterly deceived! Siddharth has already transcended the walls that humans cannot reach!'* Manu Kijal's eyes were completely dyed blue as he was desperately trying to run away. Whether it was due to the invasion of foreign enemies or other influences, the situation about Siddharth Bachchan, which he had been concerned about until recently, had melted away. Instead, the new emotion that has taken its place is blind loyalty.

*'Siddharth... He is the Apostle of a great God!'*

## **Loom.**

Before he knew it, Manu Kijal's pace had stopped in front of an ominous crack. He yelled at the dragons who stood guard in front of him.

"Hurry up and bring Siddharth! China has invaded!"

"The Master is busy. Didn't he tell you to settle the trivial matters on your own?"

Overwhelmed by the keen gleam of the dragons' eyes, Manu Kijal flinched. But he reminded himself of the seriousness of the situation and shouted again.

"Fools! Liu Zhigang has appeared! If Siddharth doesn't step up, Imphal will be taken away from him!"

"...Liu Zhigang?" The dragons, who still had memories of being human, hardened their expressions when they heard the name.

"Then wait here. I'll report it to the Master."

"No, I don't have time for that right now! I'll meet him in person and explain it to him!"

"Hah, you?"

The dragons smiled wryly at Manu Kijal as he tried to force himself to step on the gate. "Careful there. If you dare to enter here now, we won't even be able to find your bones. The Master is very hungry right now you see."

### **Chills.**

Realizing that this was not just a threat, Manu Kizal flinched.

"Hungry? What kind of nonsense is that? Isn't there enough provisions?"

"Provisions? Hahaha."

"Is that some sort of sacrifice?"

Hearing the guardian's sneer, Manu Kizal looked nervously and wavering across the gates.

"What the hell are you doing in there..."

### **¡Boom!**

Before he could finish speaking, the dragon's massive sword slammed into his feet. "Refrain from such blasphemous words! This is a great sanctuary!"

"Ehk!"

"Anyways, wait patiently. My minions have already gone to wake up the Master." Manu Kizal looked at the cracked ground and slumped in front of it, his legs giving out. At the same time, he couldn't help but feel a sense of dread as he thought about what he had just heard. '*...Wake him up?*' Maybe it's because of his mood, but somehow he didn't feel like that meant just waking up from sleep.

\* \* \*

Siddharth Bachchan opened his eyes. "...Liu Zhigang?"

"Yes."

"..."

At the dragonfolk's report, Siddharth Bachchan's eyes squinted and smiled. When he heard that the strongest force in the human race had invaded with his subordinates, he showed no signs of panicking or haste. Rather, it was a reaction of nonchalance.

"It's a nostalgic name."

Hearing the name Liu Zhigang for the first in a long time, his dark eyes fell silent. He recalled his name, reflecting on the memories of his past, now lost.

7-Star Hunter Liu Zhigang. A man who was once a colleague.

"Hmph. Liu Zhigang was indeed a strong man. Without him, no one would have survived Kamish. But now, Liu Zhigang... He's not the same person he used to be." Apart from that, today, Siddharth Bachchan had already received the power of the outer universe and all the memories of his previous life had returned.

The shock of the day those two memories collided in his head still lingered. The battle against Kamish was truly devastating. The great title National Level was obtained after that. But ten years later<sup>(1)</sup>, an overwhelming apocalypse struck the earth again... It had given him a real sense of dread.

*'...And what happened afterwards?'*

The world had come to an end. Although, he doesn't remember exactly where it ended. Communications equipment had broken down, and news from the world had been cut off. He had heard that a hunter named Sung Jin-Woo of Korea had been quite active, but he was also just a human being, so he would have died in the end. Still, if he had to think back to his last moments, Siddharth Bachchan was in the midst of a frantic battle with the light dragons that had burst through the sky.

At some point, his memory was lost, and when he came back to his senses, the whole world was at peace.

-Oh my.

The moment he remembered the incredible memories of his past life, he was horrified to see the truth. All of that horrible history has become a thing of the past. Time has gone back. And then decades passed.

It was horrifying to know that the gates had been opened on Earth once again, and that it had been invaded by demons just as it had been then. At that moment he realized.

*'Oh, so this is how it is.'*

In the midst of this chaotic repetition of history, Siddharth Bachchan was once again awakened as an S-rank hunter and was convinced of his fate.

With all the memories of his past life, he is the only hunter who has to live a new history.

*'I am the only one who can save this planet.'*

He was chosen as the savior of this world.

**¡Woosh!**

He grinned wryly, clutching the power of outer space in his hands. By comparison, there wasn't much change between the previous life and the present one. At that time, they were empowered by the Apostles of God, who were called Rulers, and waged war against the Monarchs. Now, he was strengthened by an apostle who worshiped the gods of outer universes. Although the source of its power has changed slightly, it has finally become a National Level Hunter's once again.

This is fate.

No, it was more like the faith being bestowed upon him.

*'Nothing has changed. I'm still fighting.'*

So who is the fight for? Of course, it was a fight to protect the weak humans living in this world. Siddharth Bachchan could boast of how much he had tried to protect them in his previous life. *'But I failed. In spite of our efforts, many people died.'*

Siddharth Bachchan looked bitter and blamed himself for the past. Ironically, however, his eyes were filled with a blue essence, a maddening look. *'So I won't fail this time. That's why I've been given a second chance.'*

Siddharth Bachchan was chosen. In order not to repeat the mistake. To plan for a better future.

*'I must strengthen Mankind!'* This was the beginning of a project to strengthen the whole of humanity. *'No matter how hard we try, the weak will eventually die in vain.'*

*'In order to save the poor humans who have not awakened even a handful of magical powers, they themselves must become stronger in the end!'* Coincidentally, Siddharth Bachchan already knew how to do it.

In the same way the power of the ruler was forcibly infused into his body, *'You can also force power into the human body!'* Of course, it will overload them to some extent. Their bodies could not hold up and collapse. After receiving the power of the ruler for the first time, did he not suffer from adjustment for a while? Even so, humans are animals of adaptation.

Little by little, he was sure that he would succeed one day. There may be small sacrifices in the process of the experiment, but historically, the sacrifice of the people for the greater sake is unavoidable. Under his meticulous planning, numerous experiments were carried out.

Unexpected luck was on his side. Well, in retrospect, it was not luck, but the teachings of the great god Itarim.

*'Alas! There was a path to the Tomb of the Dragons in a place like this!'*

Following Itarim's lead, he wandered through the dimensional rift, and one day a new dimension appeared in front of him.

The moment he discovered the eggs of the light dragons that had been left in hiding. Siddharth Bachchan offered a heartfelt worship to the great god Itarim. He was the first to inject the hemolytic blood from the eggs into his body. Just enough for your body to hold on. No, he needed more! Much more!

*'To save the world! I have to be much stronger than I was in my previous life!'*

[Variant No. 1]

Siddharth Bachchan, the man who was willing to give up being human.

**SHUWAAAAA!**

[Link to Kakao Page](#)

Eventually, Siddharth Bachchan stepped out of the gate and a pair of blue draconic wings spread out behind him. In front of him, a large number of dragons took up a posture of submission. The corners of Siddhart's mouth twitched at the satisfaction.

"Charge."

**RWWWAAAAAARRR!!!**

...A past life that ended in failure. The most frightening beings he had ever encountered in those painful memories. Siddharth Bachchan's dragon army, which was modeled after the legion of The Dragon Antares, flew up in unison.

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1: It's probably a slight mistake made by the author, it should be 8 years after Kamish that the fight against the Destruction Monarch takes place.